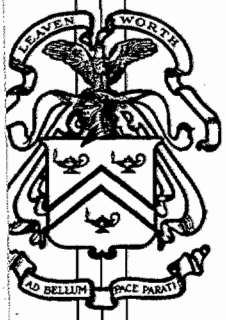
STUDIES IN BATTLE COMMAND

By the Faculty
Combat Studies Institute



U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
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CSI publications cover a variety of military history topics. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of the Army or Department of Defense.

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PREFACE

In response to the recent Battle Command initiative at Headquarters, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, the faculty of the Combat Studies Institute at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College wrote a series of essays analyzing various combat engagements and military leaders throughout history. The unifying theme of these essays was provided by the direct or indirect application to each case of the five Battle Command "competencies:"

- Seeing the enemy
- Seeing yourself
- Visualizing the battle
- Seeing into the future

The battles, operations, and leaders discussed in the chapters that follow range over the historical landscape from Gustavus Adolphus in the seventeenth century to Hamburger Hill in Vietnam. They include examples of brilliant success and dismal failure. Most of all, they offer today's military professional perspective and insight into the essence of their calling: command and leadership

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I. Gustavus Adolphus and the Crossing of the Lech

Major Robert E. Connor

The military innovations of Gustavus Adolphus are well documented. Less studied is his creativity in exploiting opportunities on the battlefield and his refusal to be stayed from a course of action. Though one of his least famous actions, the passage of the Lech River is a shining example of his ability to recognize his army's condition, establish its goal, and concentrate decisive combat power—all the while protecting his soldiers. The Swedish King's prescience in utilizing modern military techniques over 360 years ago is also remarkable.

On the morning of 16 April 1632 (new calendar), Johann Tserclaes, Count Tilly, commander of the Austrian Imperial forces, looked across the Lech River. In the distance to his right, he could hear the crash of artillery and wondered if this was covering fire for a Swedish river crossing. To his front, thick billows of dark smoke rolled across the stream, making any clear observation of the enemy impossible. Unmistakable signs of enemy activity the day and evening before had drawn him to this point on the Lech. He knew that his adversary, the Swedish king, must cross this stream to gain entry into Bavaria. His old soldier's eye and his intuition told him that this was the place such a crossing would be attempted. Tilly had taken every precaution; he and his men were ready. He had only to wait and ponder what the Swedes were doing behind all that smoke.

Gustavus was the latest contestant in a fifteen-year-old war (the Thirty Years' War) that had raged sporadically through Central Europe. The previous September, he had shattered Tilly's forces at the celebrated Battle of Breitenfeld. Despite the vigorous urgings of most of his advisers, especially the capable Axel Oxenstierna, Gustavus refused to follow up that victory with a direct march on the Habsburg capital of Vienna. He, too, had been badly mauled at Breitenfeld, and to make matters worse, his erstwhile ally, the duke-elector of Saxony, had deserted him at the height of that battle, significantly reducing Gustavus' numbers. Gustavus did not feel he was strong enough to make the long, 120-mile march through devastated and hostile Bohemia to get to Vienna; therefore, he decided to move his army to the Rhine River in the friendlier and less ravaged Palatinate, there to await the next campaigning season.

Gustavus, a potent king as well as general, had developed a formidable army that employed improved means of warfare and a new mode of fighting. A student of the organizational and tactical reforms of Maurice of Nassau, the "Lion of the North" adapted these methods to suit his own ideas and situation, thereby producing the first national, professional army. Gustavus abandoned, as had Maurice, the ponderous Spanish "square" in favor of a smaller, more flexible formation that allowed more soldiers to enter combat than was possible with the deep square.

Unfortunately, as the German historian Hans Delbrück points out, even contemporary accounts differ as to Gustavus' tactics and organization.[1] The salient features of Gustavus' innovations, however, are clear.

His basic infantry formation was the squadron, which was subdivided into platoons. This squadron, at full strength, numbered 408 men: 216 were pikemen, the remainder musketeers. These numbers are exclusive of the greatly increased body of officers and noncommissioned officers upon whom Gustavus relied for greater battlefield flexibility.[2] Two or three of these squadrons formed a brigade.

Gustavus' innovations in weaponry are many and well-known. He lightened and standardized his artillery, making it truly a "field artillery."[3] He also lightened the cumbersome musket, obviating the need for the forked rest. But more important, he regularized the use of (if he did not introduce) the paper cartridge. This sped up loading, allowing the Swedes to reduce the depth of their formations and make them wider so that more firepower was available. In addition, the Swedish cavalry abandoned the dashing but useless tactic of the caracole and drove home its sabers, exploiting shock.

After occupying Nuremberg on 21 March 1632 and then Donauwörth on 8 April, Gustavus marched toward Bavaria, intent on preventing the concentration of Tilly's forces and those of Albrecht von Wallenstein, the formidable Duke of Friedland. Tilly, based in Ingolstadt, obliged by falling behind the Danube where that river is met by the Lech, some twenty miles north of Augsburg. He then fortified the line of the Lech with outposts for sixteen miles along its eastern bank, broke all the bridges in the neighborhood, and denuded the countryside for miles around of boats and what could be considered normal bridging material.[4]

Gustavus, therefore, was faced with the formidable undertaking of crossing a water barrier in the face of a dug-in enemy. As for the Lech itself, it is an unimpressive stream most of the year, but in early April 1632, it was a swollen torrent. With no fords, no bridges, and with time being of the essence, Gustavus, steadfast in his intent to get into Bavaria before Wallenstein could make his presence felt (and confident in his ability to do so) decided to build his own bridge in the teeth of his enemy. The Lech was too swift to allow a pontoon system, so a proper bridge was the only answer. What followed marks Gustavus as a great and bold battlefield innovator, a commander with a will of iron, and a gambler of no mean stature.

To supply the necessary bridging material, Gustavus ordered his men to pull down a number of "huts in the neighboring villages."[5] While this was being done, the king performed a personal reconnaissance for a crossing site. His expert eye rested on a salient in his lines caused by a sharp, westward bend in the Lech. The three- to four-foot banks were firm, and the bend in the river would safeguard his flanks. Meanwhile, Swedish engineers were busy prefabricating sections of the bridge in the small village of Oberemdorf, about a mile and one-half from the river.[6]

On the evening of 15 April, Gustavus brought forward a party of troops and began to entrench the bank at the crossing site, positioning seventy-two cannon of various caliber along the angle made by the river's bend to cover his workmen and the eventual crossing. As soon as dawn broke, he ordered distant batteries to open fire at a false crossing site a mile upstream.[7] He also commanded that enormous piles of wet straw be set afire, which caused a dense cloud, borne on a friendly breeze, to cover the Swedish activity.

Tilly was one of the most superb and noble commanders of his day. Convinced that the Swedes would cross at the bend, he fortified a copse of trees at that point and dug a trench line about a "musket shot" (traditionally figured as 250 yards) to his front.[8] The ground was to his liking. The area from the river bank to the Imperial position was marshy and promised slow going for the attackers. Before this work was completed, however, Gustavus, foreseeing this possibility, sent a party of Finns (sources disagree as to the actual number; figures vary from 300 to 1,000) to the far shore in boats brought down from Donauwörth.[9] There, they started construction of earthworks to protect the crossing site. The Finns, of course, were immediately and savagely pressed by the Imperial troops but hung grimly on until relieved by the king's Life Guard.[10]

On the morning of the sixteenth, prefabricated sections having been brought forward, bridge construction commenced. It must have been something to see: "In lieu of arches [there] were wooden trestles with stones or other heavy weights attached to their legs to sink them and keep them in position. The length of the legs varied up to a maximum of four yards, according to the depth of the channel; and the floor of the bridge was only just above the surface of the stream."[11]

Due to the smoke screen, the covering fire from both the flanking batteries, and the musketry from the forward position, the carpenters and other workers were able to finish the bridge by about five that evening. Some five hours before, however, an advance guard of Swedish troops crossed over what there was of the bridge and waded the rest of the stream to succor the hard-pressed soldiers in the forward position. During the sharp fighting that resulted, the Imperial forces suffered serious losses. Count Tilly, as always close to the action, was struck in the knee by a solid shot from a falconet. Removed to Ingolstadt, the seventy-three-year-old Fleming died two weeks later. The Bavarian king, Maximilian, who was at the scene with the Imperial forces, was unnerved by the wounding of Tilly, abandoned the position, and withdrew the Imperial army.

When the Swedish main body crossed the next morning, Gustavus, to his shock and relief, found that the strong and extensive enemy positions were devoid of enemy troops. He voiced his admiration for Tilly's preparations and contempt for Maximilian's unsteadiness, saying: "If I had been the Bavarian, never—even if a cannonball had carried away my beard and my chin—would I have abandoned such a post as this. . . ."[12]

Gustavus' passage of the Lech may have been his tactical masterpiece. He himself considered it as important as the Battle of Breitenfeld.[13] His bold leadership, strong will, and command of the situation took his army across the Lech and into Bavaria. Ironically, in the long run, his decisive leadership would prove his undoing, for Gustavus Adolphus was slain, fighting with sword in hand, at the Battle of Lutzen the following November.

NOTES

1. Hans Delbrück, *The Dawn of Modern Warfare*, trans., Walter J. Renfroe, Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 175.
2. Philip J. Haithornwaite, *Invincible Generals* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 18.
3. Ibid., 22.
4. B. Chapman, *The History of Gustavus Adolphus and the Thirty Years' War* (London: Longman Brown, Green and Longmans, 1856), 307.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 308.
7. B. H. Liddell Hart, *Great Captains Unveiled* (New York: Books For Libraries Press, 1967), 139.
8. Chapman, *History*, 309.
9. G. B. Malleson, *The Battlefields of Germany* (London: M. Allen and Company, 1884), 59.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 308.
12. Malleson, *Battlefields*, 60.
13. Chapman, *Gustavus Adolphus*, 310.

II. Frederick the Great and the Battle of Leuthen

Dr. Samuel J. Lewis

Frederick the Great's Leuthen campaign of 1757 demonstrated the ability to synchronize, to a remarkable degree, the attributes of successful leadership and battle command. He had a realistic vision based on knowledge. He was a strict disciplinarian who cared for and protected his force. He also had a truly remarkable knowledge of the terrain. When it counted, he clearly explained what was required to every officer and soldier. These attributes allowed him, even though outnumbered, to concentrate decisive combat power at the right time and place.

On 5 November 1757, Frederick the Great decisively defeated a Franco-German army near Rossbach in Saxony. Even with this victory, however, Prussia's only ally was Great Britain, and Prussia still faced the overwhelming alliance of France, Russia, the Holy Roman Empire, and Sweden. The war had been going on for two years, and Prussia's 4.5 million inhabitants faced a coalition of some 70 million inhabitants. In addition, while Frederick was away at Rossbach, an Austrian army had swept into the province of Silesia, defeated a smaller Prussian army, and seized the fortified towns of Breslau and Schweidnitz.[1]

The king of Prussia, despite this bleak situation, remained focused on his strategic goal: not to be overwhelmed by the allied coalition. He knew that he still possessed the advantage of interior lines. And although his army was rather small, Frederick knew that it was more skilled and highly trained than those of his opponents. According to conventional wisdom, the campaign season had already ended, it being winter. Yet Frederick decided to turn that disadvantage on its head, for the enemy would not expect him to continue operations. On 13 November, he left most of his army as a covering force in Saxony under command of his brother Prince Henri and, with only 13,000 men, marched southeast to retake the province of Silesia. He also directed Marshal Keith to make a demonstration into Bohemia in order to divert Austrian forces.[2]

Frederick moved his small force 170 miles, arriving on 28 November in the small village of Parchwitz. There he replaced the general who had been defeated in Silesia with his trusted subordinate, General Hans von Ziethen. He directed the latter to assemble at Parchwitz on 2 December. The king allowed the army to rest and refit at Parchwitz, providing wine, bread, and meat to the soldiers. He slept in the open like any common soldier and warmed himself at their campfires. The king ate, drank, and conversed with the soldiers as an equal. He spoke separately to the officer corps, in the celebrated "Parchwitz Address," delivered in German:

> The enemy hold the same entrenched camp of Breslau which my troops defended so honourably. I am marching to attack this position. I have no need to explain my conduct or why I am determined on this measure. I fully recognise the dangers attached to this enterprise, but in my present situation I must conquer or die. If we go under, all is lost.

> Bear in mind, gentlemen, that we shall be fighting for our glory, the preservation of our homes, and for our wives and children. I will look after their families. If anybody prefers to take his leave, he can have it now, but he will cease to have any claim on my benevolence.[3]

On the morning of 4 December, Frederick moved his army east from Parchwitz. Riding with the Hussars in the advance guard, he was amazed when local peasants told him Austrian troops and a bakery were ahead in Neumarkt. Several Prussian squadrons enveloped the village, while other Hussars dismounted and stormed the Austrian position. They killed 100 Croats and captured another 500, along with enough bread for Frederick's forces. Two regiments of Austrian light cavalry managed to flee east. The Prussian Army camped at Parchwitz, where Frederick learned that Prince Charles of Lorraine had quit his fortified camp at Breslau and moved his army across the Weistritz River and camped in the snow without baggage and tents. The king probably had already decided to attack, out of strategic necessity and opportunity. He had trained his army on these very fields during the peacetime fall maneuvers, so the Prussians had an intimate knowledge of the terrain. Frederick estimated that Prince Charles had about 39,000 men.[4]

Prince Charles had in fact some 65,000 men, which, along with his recent victories, undoubtedly bolstered his confidence. Nevertheless, upon crossing the Weistritz, he was surprised to learn that Frederick was encamped at Neumarkt. Suddenly, his numbers became a hindrance when he decided to deploy this large force in a line some four miles long, from Nippern south to Sagschuetz. Darkness came too early, hindering the deployment and leading to confusion.[5]

Frederick ordered his army to rise at 0400, and an hour or so later, he marched them in column, led by his light forces. The day was clear but quite cold, with a thin dusting of snow on the ground. A force of Austrian and Saxon light cavalry obstructed them at the village of Borne, but the Prussian Hussars routed them quickly and Frederick directed that the 600 prisoners be marched past his army. He rode on to a crest from which he could see the entire Austrian Army lined up before him. He looked with care. Swamp and peat bogs blocked the Austrian north flank, but the southern flank hung in the air. Furthermore, two rises in the ground would hide a Prussian movement to the south. But the king knew that he needed to distract the Austrians during the concealed march. He consequently deployed forces in front of Borne, giving the Austrians the impression he would attack their north flank. The deception worked, and Prince Charles dispatched his reserves to the north, rather than the south.[6]

In the late morning, while the Austrians were mesmerized by the demonstration north of Borne, Frederick began moving his main effort south down the concealed approach. Shortly after noon, the lead column emerged west of Lobetinz. There the King directed them east, past the Austrian flank. General von Ziethen halted them past Schriegwitz and formed them into line. As his right and center continued to deploy, Frederick rode down the line explaining what was required of each

commander. He even went so far as to tell two ensigns who would lead the opening attack not to march too quickly.[7]

The Prussians used a unique march technique, the oblique order, to deploy against Sagschuetz. By 1300, although outnumbered more than 2 to 1, Frederick had concentrated his combat power at a 45-degree angle to strike the exposed Austrian left flank. His gunners had laboriously hauled ten super-heavy cannon (*die Brummer*) all the way from Glogau and deployed them on a knoll overlooking Sagschuetz.[8]

The commander of the Austrian left wing, General Franz von Nadasdy, was a competent professional who had arranged his defense with skill. But near 1300, Frederick attacked. His heavy cannon destroyed the abatis in front of Sagschuetz and silenced the Austrian guns. Like a well-oiled machine, the Prussian infantry moved forward, striking the Austrian line at a 45-degree angle. The defenders fired one good volley, saw the line of Prussian bayonets, and fled. Nadasdy requested more troops, but Prince Charles had sent the reserve to the opposite flank. Nadasdy attempted to make stands as individual battalions from the second line marched up, and he ably fenced with his cavalry—but his great heart and skill would not avail him that cold afternoon as the Prussians rolled up the Austrian flank.[9]

About 1430, Prince Charles attempted to reform his line, pivoting his broken left on the village of Leuthen. Frederick had, however, generated far too much combat power. An hour later the Prussian infantry and artillery reached this improvised position. For the next hour, the stiffest fighting of the day took place about Leuthen, with the Prussian infantry eventually storming the village. Near 1630, the commander of the Austrian right wing, Count Joseph Lucchesi, observed the Prussian reserve marching toward Leuthen and brought the cavalry reserve forward to strike the Prussian flank and, he hoped, save the day. But hidden in a hollow was General Georg von Driessen's Prussian cavalry reserve. Driessen let the Austrian cavalry pass them and then, on his own initiative, charged their flank and rear. The Austrian cavalry fled back towards the Weistritz, some of them riding through their own infantry. Confronted by this and the approaching Prussian infantry and cavalry, the Austrians broke, with entire battalions surrendering or following their cavalry off the field. The battle was largely over by 1730, and soon after, snow began falling. The Prussian Army suffered 6,382 casualties, in all probability most being light wounds. Prince Charles lost some 10,000 men killed and wounded. The Prussians captured an additional 12,000.[10]

Frederick's victory in fact destroyed Prince Charles' army, and subsequently the Prussians recaptured the province of Silesia, taking an additional 17,000 prisoners. In this campaign, Frederick managed to synchronize to a remarkable degree the attributes of successful leadership and battle command. His vision of liberating Silesia was based on knowledge of his force and the enemy. Although his army was disciplined, experienced, and confident, he nevertheless clearly expressed

what was required of every officer and man, both in camp and on the battlefield. He cared for and protected his force even though he was of royal blood. But undoubtedly one of the greatest advantages he possessed was his intimate knowledge of the terrain. These attributes allowed him, even though outnumbered, to concentrate decisive combat power at the right place and time.[11]

NOTES

1. Thomas Carlyle, *History of Frederick the Second Called Frederick the Great,* 6 Vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, n.d.), vol. 5, 170—93.
2. Ibid.
3. There are several different accounts of the "Parchwitz Address." I use that of Prince Ferdinand, as quoted in Christopher Duffy, *The Military Life of Frederick the Great* (New York: Atheneum, 1986), 147.
4. Robert B. Asprey, *Frederick The Great: The Magnificent Enigma* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1986), 472—85.
5. Ibid.
6. Duffy, op. cit., 147—60.
7. Ibid.
8. Carlyle, op. cit., 193—215.
9. Ibid.
10. Duffy, op. cit.
11. Ibid.

III. Old Fritz Stumbles: Frederick the Great at Kunersdorf, 1759

Lieutenant Colonel Scott Stephenson

Prudence prepares and traces the route that valor must pursue.[1]
—Frederick the Great

Even the "Great Captains" had bad days. So it was with Frederick the Great of Prussia. Though considered the foremost commander of his day, he still had his share of setbacks and defeats. Frederick's worst day, undoubtedly, came at Kunersdorf during the Seven Years' War. There, on 12 August 1759, his army was routed by a combined Austrian and Russian force, with almost half of Frederick's army killed or wounded.

How was an acknowledged master of the battle command so soundly defeated? Certainly, Federick's opponents deserve a share of the credit. They fought a masterful defensive battle based on well-chosen positions, tenacious resistance, and superbly timed counterattacks. Frederick, however, chose to blame the defeat on the failure of his own men.[2]

Yet the record shows that the Prussian king bears the greatest burden of blame. His ill-considered plan of battle, his failure to measure the combat power of his own forces against that of his enemy, and finally, his insistence on pressing a hopeless attack[3] were all critical elements in the Prussian disaster. Thus, the Battle of Kunersdorf provides a compelling example of failure in battle command.

Before the battle, in the summer of 1759, no one could have faulted Frederick for feeling desperate. As the fourth campaign season of the Seven Years' War began, his strategic situation seemed hopeless. Prussia's enemies—Austria, Russia, France, and Sweden—threatened his kingdom from every direction with armies vastly outnumbering his own.

In late July, an especially dangerous threat appeared on the eastern frontier of Prussia, where a Russian army under General Saltikov had combined with an Austrian corps under General Laudon. Together, the Russians and Austrians had more than 64,000 men poised on the Oder River, only a few days' march from the Prussian capital of Berlin.[4]

To face them, Frederick hastily gathered various detachments, creating a force of 50,000 men. But though powerful in numbers, the Prussian troops were not comparable to those Frederick had led to victory at Rossbach and Leuthen. Losses in the early campaigns of the war had decimated the Prussian officer corps and seriously diluted the quality of the rank and file.[5] Frederick wrote: "I would fear nothing if I still had ten battalions of the quality of 1757. But this cruel war has killed off our finest soldiers, and the ones we have left do not even measure up to the worst of our troops at the outset."[6]

Nevertheless, Frederick resolved to attack Saltikov's army. By 10 August, the Prussian king had concentrated his army and, in a forced march, crossed the Oder near Frankfurt. The journey was exceedingly difficult. The troops were short of food and water, and the midsummer heat sapped the men's strength.[7] Frederick himself was exhausted by his long days in the saddle and the pressure of holding his state together against overwhelming odds. At the time, he wrote, "A damned soul in hell is in no more abominable situation than this in which I find myself."[8]

As Frederick conducted his initial reconnaissance of the enemy positions, the prospects for a decisive success seemed terribly small. The allied forces had fortified themselves on high ground just north of the village of Kunersdorf, and their positions were reinforced by obstacles and surrounded by marshy ground and forest, making deployment for an attacker extremely difficult. After measuring the strength of the enemy positions, Frederick decided to flank them with his main body, leaving a detachment under General Finck to counter what Frederick believed was the enemy center. Thus, at two in the morning of 12 August, the Prussians began a tiring, eight-hour march around the Austro-Russian entrenchments. Morning found the Prussian main body south of the allied position.[9]

But the king's mental picture of the enemy deployment proved false. The allied positions were oriented to the southeast, not to the north as the Prussians had expected. Instead of facing an exposed flank, Frederick's forces faced the strongest sector of the allied position. To make matters worse, surprise was lost as the weary Prussians spent most of the morning deploying their infantry and manhandling their artillery into position. Nevertheless, Frederick decided to go ahead with his attack.[10]

The essential elements of the ensuing battle may be summarized briefly. At 1130, the Prussians began their bombardment of the Mühlberg, a hill at the extreme eastern end of the allied lines. Despite fatigue, the initial Prussian assault was launched with considerable élan. The Mühlberg was overrun, and dozens of enemy guns were captured. This early success seemed to promise decisive results, but Frederick's efforts to exploit the capture of the Mühlberg made little headway. Terrain was the problem. The hill was separated from the rest of the allied position by a ravine called the Kuhgrund. Here, the attacking Prussian infantry were packed into a narrow front and decimated by massed artillery and musket fire from Russian reserves. Over a period of hours, the Prussian attacks were repeatedly repulsed, with heavy casualties.[11]

The decisive moment in the battle came in the heat of midafternoon. Losses and exhaustion had shaken Prussian morale, while allied resistance remained unbroken. Frederick's subordinates begged him to call off the attack and accept the limited success gained in the initial assault.[12] But Frederick stubbornly insisted on continuing the attack and committed his last reserves. Finck's detachment on the right marched into the fight and was cut to pieces in short order. On the left, desperate

Prussian cavalry charges were canalized by ponds and broken up by entrenched Russian artillery. Seeing the Prussians waver, the Austrian general, Laudon, launched a devastating cavalry attack on Frederick's left. Prussian mounted forces were swept from the field, and the morale of the Prussian infantry finally cracked. As evening approached, Frederick's army was reduced to a panic-stricken mob fleeing for the Oder bridges.[13]

At this moment of crisis, the Prussian king showed courage and determination. According to witnesses, he seemed to defy death as he attempted to rally his broken army. Two horses were shot out from under him, and, in the final stages of the fight, Prussian cavalry had to cut their way through a band of Cossacks to extricate Frederick from the battlefield.[14]

But bravery could not redeem Frederick's earlier mistakes, which were the key to the outcome of the battle. An analysis of the battle based on our current doctrine indicates the Prussian king made numerous critical errors.

The U.S. Army believes a commander must see the terrain, see the enemy, see his own force, and mass decisive combat power at the right time and place while protecting his force.[15] Frederick failed in each of these areas.

First, he failed to read the terrain correctly, thus sowing the seeds of disaster. His hasty reconnaissance failed to reveal the true layout of the allied position. Thus, the ponds and marshes around Kunersdorf restricted the employment of the superb Prussian cavalry and prevented the king's artillery from supporting the later stages of the attack. Worst of all, the king failed to identify the Kuhgrund as a deathtrap for his infantry.[16]

Second, Frederick did not "see" his enemy, vastly underestimating his opponents' capabilities. A few months before, he had written that the Russians were "as savage as they are inept, . . . not worthy of mention."[17] As for the Austrians, Frederick knew they had improved since his earlier battles with them, yet he refused to believe they could stand against Prussian infantry.[18]

Perhaps Frederick's most grievous error was his failure to recognize the depleted condition of his own men, both before and during the battle. The year before he had written to Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick: "The best infantry in the universe can be repulsed and put in disorder where it has to fight terrain, the enemy, and artillery. Our infantry, weakened and debased by its losses and even by its successes, must be led in difficult enterprises with caution. . . ."[19] Yet Frederick showed no such caution at Kunersdorf. He demanded more of his men than they could bear.

Battle command doctrine calls for a leader to protect his force while concentrating combat power at the decisive time and place. Yet delays forced on Frederick robbed him of the element of surprise, key to his battle plan. Further, Frederick's chosen point of attack—into the strength of the enemy—offered little opportunity

for decisive results. Finally, by pressing a futile attack against the warnings of his subordinates, Frederick fatally compromised the security of his army.

Frederick's mistakes suggest a larger point in the assessment of the king of Prussia as a battle commander. That point is balance. Our doctrine divides battle command into leadership and decision making. The successful combat commander provides willpower, energy, and personal example, as well as careful, rational analysis. Leadership and decision making are complementary elements of battle command success.[20] On 12 August 1759, Frederick the Great was capable of determined leadership but incapable of fulfilling his role as a competent decision maker for his army.

Perhaps he was feeling the strain of four hard years of campaigning. Perhaps he felt too keenly the need to defeat Saltikov's force quickly so he could turn and deal with the other armies invading his kingdom. Certainly, his capability to think logically was diminished by sheer physical fatigue. He had gone practically sleepless in the week prior to the battle.[21] Whatever the reason, Frederick's actions on the day of battle indicate he had lost his balance as a battle commander.

Frederick's conduct after Kunersdorf offers further evidence of this point. In the days following the battle, he renounced his command of the army and prepared to give up his throne. He even considered suicide. He wrote his foreign minister, "I have no resources left, and I must confess, I believe all is lost. I don't wish to survive the downfall of my state *Adieu* for always."[22]

Frederick and his kingdom would survive the crisis. With time and rest, the Prussian king recovered his equilibrium. He was cheered by the actions of his enemies who, amazingly, failed to exploit their victory. The Russians, taking stock of their considerable losses, concluded that they were carrying more than their fair share of the war against Frederick and decided not to move against Berlin. Laudon's Austrians opted to leave the Russians and move back into Silesia. Frederick called it "the miracle of the House of Brandenburg."[23]

But a modern commander cannot count on miracles. Neither can he afford to lose his balance. He must combine his role as decision maker with that of leader and properly gauge the effects of stress, fatigue, and fear on his own powers of judgment. This, Frederick failed to do. A modern commander must also protect his force. Frederick himself wrote, "What praise would the general merit who, in order to conquer, must have troops who have no need of nourishment, soldiers who are incapable of fatigue, and heroes who are immortal?"[24] But these are characteristics Frederick expected of his men at Kunersdorf. And while an absolute monarch such as Frederick might disregard the trials of his men and their heavy losses, a U.S. Army commander has the moral duty to guard the welfare and lives of his soldiers.

"The errors of great men," Frederick wrote, "are exemplary lessons to those who possess fewer abilities."[25] Clearly, Frederick's errors were the key to the Prussian disaster at Kunersdorf on 12 August 1759. Modern soldiers, whatever their abilities, can draw lessons from Frederick's failure.

NOTES

1. Quote from Frederick, "On the Generalship of Charles XII," from Jay Luvaas, ed. and trans., *Frederick the Great on the Art of War* (New York: Free Press, 1966), 349.
2. Christopher Duffy, The Army of Frederick the Great (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1974), 188.
3. Clausewitz uses the example of Kunersdorf to illustrate the idea of knowing when to quit while you are ahead. See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 243.
4. Christopher Duffy, *The Military Life of Frederick the Great* (New York: Atheneum, 1986), 183.
5. The condition of the Prussian Army is described in Duffy, *Army*, 189—91.
6. Quotation from Duffy, *Life*, 190.
7. The conditions of march are from Nancy Mitford, *Frederick the Great* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984), 242.
8. Robert B. Asprey, *Frederick the Great: The Magnificent Enigma* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1986), 514.
9. The reconnaissance and flank march are described in Duffy, *Army*, 188.
10. Duffy, *Life*, 184—85.
11. The Prussian failure in the Kuhgrund is from Olaf Groehler, *Die Kriege Friedrichs II* (Berlin: Brandenburgisches Verlagshaus, 1990), 125.
12. The argument over the continued attack is from C. B. Brackenbury, *Frederick the Great* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1884), 212.
13. The description of the rout is from Duffy, *Life*, 187—88.
14. Frederick's conduct at the end of the battle is from Duffy, *Life*, 188.
15. The elements of battle command are taken from a slide presentation on NTC-focused rotation on battle command.
16. The terrain also prevented the Prussians from repositioning their artillery in time to support subsequent attacks. Asprey, 517—18.
17. Luvaas, 265.
18. Ibid., 268. Shortly after the battle, one of Frederick's officers said of the king, "He was doomed by his overconfidence, and by his scorn for an enemy who is, in fact, by no means to be underestimated." Duffy, *Life*, 190.
19. Luvaas, 273.
20. The discussion of elements of battle command is from Field Manual 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army, 1993), 2—14 to 2—15.
21. Mitford, 242.
22. Groehler, 126.
23. The aftermath of the battle is from Duffy, *Life*, 190—91.
24. Quote from Frederick, "On the Generalship of Charles XII," in Luvaas, 349.
25. Ibid., 353.

IV. Andrew Jackson's Iron Will in the Creek War, 1813—1814

Lieutenant Colonel James E. Medley

While it is important for a commander to understand his situation, have a vision of his end state, and promulgate his intent, these relate only to the planning of operations. The essence of battle command lies in the commander's ability to exert the force of his will upon his troops to accomplish the mission. General George S. Patton wrote that "execution is to plan as 5 to 1."[1] Thus, exercising his force of will to execute successful operations is the commander's most important trait.

General Andrew Jackson's iron will was his principal command characteristic. Jackson's force of will, more than any other factor, brought the Creek Indian War of 1813—14 to a successful conclusion. His force of will was decisive because the obstacles working against him were legion: he faced an elusive and adroit enemy; his soldiers were on the verge of mutiny; his supply system did not work; and Jackson was in pain and poor health because of severe wounds he had suffered in a personal gun battle just before the campaign. Any one of these obstacles could have caused a lesser commander to give up. Andrew Jackson's force of will, however, was too strong to allow his campaign to fail.

Jackson began the campaign while suffering great pain from two severe gunshot wounds to his arm. Doctors advised him to have the afflicted limb amputated, but Jackon refused. Instead, the weakened commander issued a proclamation that "The health of your general is restored" and "he will command in person."[2] Jackson was far from truthful about his constitution. For months, he suffered greatly. His arm remained in a sling, and pieces of splintered bone only gradually worked their way out through his flesh. Sending these grisly relics home to his wife, he wrote, "I hope all the loose pieces of bone is [*sic*] out and I will not be longer pained with it."[3] The rigors of active campaigning in the wilderness of the Mississippi Territory exacerbated Jackson's physical condition to the point where, historian Robert Remini says, "His constitution was half wrecked, but his willpower had grown to monumental proportions."[4] His will would be further tested by his mutinous army, which wanted to go home.

General Jackson's army was composed of both militiamen and volunteers who had been activated to fight the Creeks for a specified period of service. When Jackson took to the field in October 1813, his volunteers believed their time was up in December. Jackson maintained otherwise. These differing opinions between the troops and their commander occurred because the men had been inactivated for a period after their initial call-up. They believed, however, that the clock kept ticking throughout their enlistment. Jackson, on the other hand, believed that they had a break in service. Nonetheless, the soldiers were determined to leave in December, while Jackson was even more adamant that they should stay and

advance on the enemy. When moral persuasion failed to convince the troops to stay, Jackson resorted to force. Shortly after the victorious battle at Talladega, the militia found themselves surrounded by their volunteer counterparts when they attempted to leave. The next day, roles were reversed and Jackson used the militia to prevent the volunteers' departure. Matters came to a head on 10 December when an entire brigade tried to go. Jackson swore, "I will quell mutiny and punish desertion when and wheresoever it may be attempted."[5] Indeed, Jackson threatened personally to shoot the first man who attempted to leave. He later described the scene, saying that to prevent the mutiny, he had "been compelled to point my cannon against [the volunteers] with a lighted match to destroy them."[6] Jackson's iron will held his army together. While physically debilitated, his determination to keep his army in the field to defeat the Creeks was Herculean.

Perhaps his soldiers might have been less inclined to leave had they not been practically starving during the campaign. Earlier, the supply system had collapsed, making even the most stalwart soldier turn his gaze homeward. From the outset, the supply contractors had experienced difficulties in meeting the terms of their contract. In a letter to Jackson on 18 October 1813, they regretfully informed him that "It would be the extreme of folly and unpardonable in us to hold out the idea to you that we could supply you while on the march, when Sir, the means are not within our reach."[7] This initial breakdown was a harbinger of things to come. Jackson was forced to change contractors repeatedly. Each one, in turn, failed to get supplies to the army. An exasperated Jackson wrote: "There is an enemy whom I dread much more than I do the hostile Creek, and whose power, I am fearful, I shall first be made to feel. You know I mean that meagre-monster Famine."[8] The prospect of starvation boded ill for the campaign. Hunger succeeded in enervating Jackson's troops more effectively than Indian attacks. General Jackson firmly believed that, unless an effective supply system could be established, "a pretext will be given for sedition, mutiny, and desertion, as has heretofore arisen, and which has destroyed one of the best armies in the world of its numbers, and which will destroy the present campaign."[9] Thus, he faced three great internal obstacles to waging a successful campaign: his poor health, a mutinous army, and a lack of supplies. Any one of these problems could have easily caused a less determined commander to postpone or terminate his campaign against a large, elusive foe. The strength of Jackson's iron will to move his force against the Creeks was all-powerful, however, and it overcame the inertia imposed upon his army by these obstacles.

Jackson's first major battle occurred at Tallushatchee on 3 November 1813. His forces maneuvered adroitly from Fort Strother and were able to encircle the hostile Creek village. In a sharp engagement, the army killed 186 Creeks while suffering 46 casualties (mostly wounded). This victory brought about significant strategic benefits, causing a number of Creek villages to pledge allegiance to General Jackson. Operationally, the battle was not decisive, however, because a large

faction of the Indians under the leadership of Red Eagle continued to wage war throughout the territory.

Wasting no time, Jackson led his reluctant army toward the friendly Creek village at Talladega. Red Eagle's force of approximately 1,000 braves had surrounded the village to prevent the Creeks there from making friendly overtures to Jackson's army. On 9 November, Jackson again maneuvered brilliantly to create a double envelopment of the hostile Creeks. In the ensuing battle, Jackson's forces killed 300 Creeks and lost only 15 dead and 85 wounded. Red Eagle, however, succeeded in escaping with 700 braves, again denying Jackson a decisive victory. Jackson was now forced to postpone his pursuit in order to find provisions for his starving troops. Returning to Fort Strother, his army found no supplies waiting. The gnawing hunger pangs that had plagued his soldiers continued unabated.

The tactical victories at Tallushatchee and Talladega could have been hollow victories had Jackson not exerted his iron will. His steadfastness kept the army intact, allowing the campaign to continue. In January 1814, Jackson moved his army southward again. The elusive Creeks under Red Eagle answered by attacking his army twice during the month—at Emuckfaw Creek and at Enotachopco Creek. Neither battle was decisive, but the Creeks suffered much higher casualties than did Jackson's soldiers. Following these engagements, Jackson returned to Fort Strother in February to gather reinforcements that had arrived from Tennessee. By March, his force had grown to almost 5,000. Jackson's willpower alone had kept his army in the field. Now he had a substantial force under his command and was determined to bring the enemy to decisive battle and end the campaign successfully.

The opportunity for decisive victory came in March at the Creek stronghold at Horseshoe Bend. Red Eagle and some 1,500 Creeks had fortified a peninsula there by erecting a substantial breastwork along its neck. Jackson positioned his artillery to fire directly on the works in order to breach it. He then planned to attack through the breach with his superior force and overwhelm the defenders. The ensuing cannonade lasted two hours but failed to penetrate the Creek defenses. A withering fire poured forth from both sides, and casualties began to mount. Jackson ordered General John Coffee to send some soldiers to swim the river and cut the Indians' canoes loose. The men were successful, thus removing the Creeks' means of escape. Jackson then directed a diversion by setting fire to the village opposite the breastwork. When the rising smoke from these fires became visible, Jackson ordered a frontal assault upon the breastwork by the Thirty-ninth Regiment. The action was point-blank and hand-to-hand. The force of Jackson's attack pushed the Creeks back down the peninsula, and the battle became a slaughter. When it ended, over 900 Indians had been killed with a loss of 47 dead and 159 wounded American soldiers.

The Battle of Horseshoe Bend proved decisive. A proud but defeated Red Eagle surrendered himself to General Jackson in April, stating that "If I had an army, I

would yet fight, and contend to the last: but I have none; my people are all gone. I can now do no more than weep over the misfortunes of my nation."[10] Red Eagle's surrender set the stage for total capitulation by the entire Creek nation, consummated by the Treaty of Fort Jackson in July 1814. The Indians were forced to turn over some 23 million acres to the United States, land that would constitute most of the future state of Alabama.

The Creek War of 1813—14 thus ended favorably for the United States. The campaign that seemed doomed to failure by a mutinous army, an inadequate supply system, and an elusive enemy was waged successfully by a sick but determined commander who kept his army together and maneuvered it against the enemy through the sheer power of his will. Jackson's determination is evident in a letter written to Governor William Blount when Jackson's problems were at their height and failure loomed large: "What[?] Retrograde under these circumstances[?] I will perish first . . . to pause or hesitate at such a crisis as this. Such conduct cannot be justified, cannot be excused . . . I will do my duty."[11] Andrew Jackson provides a prime example of a commander invoking his will to move his force against the enemy. This aspect of battle command is the greatest challenge a commander faces. Invoking his will successfully is often the most crucial contribution a commander makes to a campaign. It is the difference between success and failure.

NOTES

1. Roger H. Nye, *The Patton Mind* (Garden City Park, NY: Avery Publishing Group Inc., 1993), 99.
2. Robert V. Remini, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 72.
3. Ibid., 84.
4. Ibid.
5. John Spencer Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (Washington, DC, 1926—35), vol. 1, Jackson to Martin, 4 December 1813, 370—73.
6. Remini, 77.
7. Bassett, Read, Mitchell, and Company to Jackson, 18 October 1813, *Correspondence*, 333—34.
8. Ibid., Jackson to Pope, Perkins, Brahan, Burrows, Allen, Bibb, Manning, and Thompson, 23 October 1813, *Correspondence, 335—36.*
9. Ibid., Jackson to Pope and Brahan, 8 December 1813, *Correspondence*, 377—78.
10. Remini, 83.
11. Basssett, Jackson to Blount, 29 December 1813, *Correspondence*, 416—20.

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V. Jacob Brown and Winfield Scott in the Niagara Campaign of 1814

Major Charles D. Collins, Jr.

By July 1814, the United States had been at war with Great Britain for two years. During those years, the U.S. Army had suffered numerous humiliating defeats. British and Canadian troops had repulsed three major invasion attempts by U.S. forces along the Canadian border. The American failures were mainly due to atrocious American leadership and a well-trained enemy. Put bluntly, overaged Revolutionary War veterans commanded poorly trained troops. Their combined incompetence resulted in defeat after defeat despite the significant U.S. numerical superiority over the British in most of the battles. However, the character of the war soon changed as new leaders advanced to command the American war effort. These new leaders, whose rise to the top had been based upon proven battlefield successes rather than political prowess, displayed many of the characteristics known today as "battle command competencies."

The two most significant leaders on the Niagara frontier were Jacob Brown and Winfield Scott. Jacob Brown had been promoted to major general by the secretary of war because he was a proven fighter. Brown, in turn, selected Scott to be his brigadier general because of his exceptional abilities in both administration and leadership. Both men believed in the American soldier and that hard training and energetic leadership were the requisite to victory.[1]

On 3 July 1814, Brown led a small army across the Niagara River into Canada. His force consisted of two small brigades of Regulars and one brigade of volunteers, a total of only 3,500 men. Brigadier General Scott commanded one of the Regular brigades and was also the Army's nominal second in command. The secretary of war had ordered Brown to seize Fort Erie and then move against Fort George. Brown's mission was not an easy one to accomplish because the British had approximately 6,300 men under Lieutenant General Gordon Drummond available in the Lake Ontario region for local defense.[2]

The Americans, nonetheless, easily captured Fort Erie and its 137-man garrison. Scott then led his brigade northward toward Fort George as the army's advance guard. His troops engaged the British advance guard near the hamlet of Chippewa on 5 July 1814. By today's standards, the battle was a very small affair. The British commander, Major General Phineas Riall, had only 1,500 men. Scott's Brigade was about the same size. Both sides marched bravely forward to within point-blank musket range of each other.

Scott's Regulars, to their own disgust, had been uniformed in gray because no blue cloth had been available. The gray uniforms led Riall to assume he was facing only militia and could expect an easy victory. As the battle progressed, however,

and the Americans maneuvered confidently through shot and shell, Riall was reported to have exclaimed: "Those are Regulars, by God!" In about half an hour, Scott defeated the British and drove them from the field. The British had suffered terribly, sustaining about 500 killed and wounded. American casualties were slightly over 300.[3]

This small tactical victory was a great morale booster for the American Army. For the first time in the war, American soldiers had claimed a victory in a stand-up fight in the open field. They now were confident that they could beat the vaunted British Regulars in battle.

After the fight at Chippewa, Brown was able to advance the American army across the Chippewa River to Queenstown. From Queenstown, he hoped to make a joint effort with the Navy to capture Fort George. Unfortunately, the naval commander for Lake Ontario, Commodore Isaac Chauncey, refused to cooperate. He said: "The Secretary of the Navy has honored us with a higher destiny—we are intended to seek and to fight the enemy's fleet. This is the great purpose of the Government in creating this Fleet and I shall not be diverted in my efforts to effectuate it, by any sinister attempt to render us either subordinate to or an appendage of the army."[4] Unable to continue his advance against Fort George without naval support, Brown withdrew to Chippewa. Meanwhile, Drummond attempted to force Brown to withdraw even farther by sending a raid down the American side of the Niagara River. Instead, Brown decided to advance and force the British to fight on the Canadian side of the river.

Late on the afternoon of 25 July, Scott marched north with his brigade of 1,100 men. Near Lundy's Lane, he encountered the 2,000-man British force under Riall. Scott brashly attacked them without waiting for Brown to bring up the rest of the army. At first, it appeared that his aggressive tactics were going to be successful. Riall, visibly disturbed by his earlier defeat at Chippewa, ordered the British to retreat. However, Drummond quickly stabilized the position and ordered the British to hold.

From 1900 to 2100, Scott grimly tried to maintain the offensive against overwhelming numbers. The British, however, were successful in defeating each of Scott's desperate attacks. At around 2100, Brown arrived from Chippewa with the rest of the American army, bringing the combined force to 2,100 men. Drummond, however, received reinforcements at about the same time, giving him a total of about 3,000 men. Brown, nonetheless, captured the key high ground and almost all the British artillery. But the British refused to quit the field and repeatedly counterattacked. The battle continued to rage for several more hours, with the musketry at times so loud that it drowned out the sound of the Niagara Falls. As the battle unfolded, Riall and Drummond were seriously wounded. At midnight, the exhausted Americans withdrew. Casualties were heavy for both sides. The

Americans suffered 853 killed, wounded, and missing. The British total was only slightly higher.[5]

After the battle, the American army retreated to the fortifications around Fort Erie and expanded them. Due to Brown's and Scott's serious wounds, the Americans were forced to evacuate both their leaders. The British, after a cautious pursuit of the Americans, laid siege to Fort Erie. A month later, they mounted an unsuccessful assault on the fort and suffered heavy casualties.

Because of his wounds, Scott saw no more action during the war, but Brown recovered and returned to Fort Erie in September 1814. True to his aggressive character, he immediately organized and directed a major American sortie out of the fort to break the siege. The resulting battle was very costly for both sides, the British losing 607 men to the Americans' 511. Both armies now had fewer than 2,000 effective troops each. Drummond retreated to Chippewa to rebuild his devastated army. Now, the Americans no longer had the strength to hold their position so, on 5 November, they destroyed their fortifications and retreated back to their own shore.[6]

The four-month-long Niagara campaign produced numerous casualties but no decisive results. However, Brown's and Scott's leadership skills did show that the American soldier, given good training and effective leadership, could win on the battlefield. The two leaders' primary strengths were related to "battle command competencies": *seeing the enemy*, *seeing the terrain*, and *visualizing the battle.* Their weaknesses were in *seeing themselves* and *seeing the future.*

Both Brown and Scott clearly understood the capabilities of their enemy. Each had been involved in extensive fighting against the British for two years. They had great respect for the tenacity and valor of the British Army and understood there would be no easy victories. They also clearly understood the importance of terrain. In all their battles, they directed their actions toward seizing key ground. The best example was at Lundy's Lane, where Brown conducted the attacks toward the small hill dominating the battlefield. The British were then forced into wasteful counter-attacks to regain the hill. Most important, the senior U.S. Army leadership understood the importance of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario as key terrain. Without naval support, however, they could not advance along the banks of the lake without risking being cut off by the British Navy. Chauncey's refusal to cooperate with the Army doomed the campaign to failure. In addition, both commanders easily visualized the early nineteenth century battlefield and realized the importance of training and discipline. Prior to the campaign, Scott had organized a camp for training and drilled the army for ten hours a day on individual and collective skills. These skills were readily evident in the Americans' performance at Chippewa. Their training proficiency also played a major role in the difficult fight at Lundy's Lane against a numerically superior enemy.

Brown and Scott also had weaknesses in their leadership skills. They failed, for instance, to control their own aggressiveness. Scott's reckless and unsupported attack at Lundy's Lane almost destroyed his brigade. Brown also failed to curb his aggressiveness as well, failing to *see the future* and to consider the impact of his rash behavior on his small army. Once the navy refused to cooperate with the army, the campaign no longer had attainable objectives. Brown, nonetheless, continued to seek battle with the enemy. This resulted in the costly draw at Lundy's Lane and the expensive attack to break the siege at Fort Erie. Even though Brown broke the British siege lines at Fort Erie, he no longer had the strength to hold the fort.

The tactical successes of the U.S. Regulars at Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, and Fort Erie fueled the debate within the United States on whether the army should be composed of Regulars or militia. However, as stated by Russell F. Weigley, the debaters missed the point. The Regulars of the Niagara campaign had not been in service much longer than most of the militiamen. The main difference had been in leadership. Because they received solid training and were led by competent leaders, the soldiers on the Niagara frontier became true Regulars in a short time.[7]

NOTES

1. John R. Elting, *Amateurs, to Arms!* (New York: Algonquin Books, 1991), 177.
2. Ibid., 182.
3. Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 187.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 189.
6. Ibid.
7. Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 55.

VI. Menshikov at Inkerman: A Failure to Command

Major Tamas F. Dreilinger

Along with Agincourt and Crécy, the Battle of Inkerman goes down in British military history as a sterling example of an English victory achieved against overwhelming odds. Arguably the pivotal engagement of the Crimean War, the battle, fought on 5 November 1854, pitted 8,500 British defenders (later reinforced by 7,000 Frenchmen) against 42,000 Russians. Due to poor visibility and even poorer generalship, the fight degenerated into a series of determined attacks and counterattacks. Casualties were inordinately high: 2,500 British, 1,000 French, and over 12,000 Russians[1] lay dead or wounded after the eight-hour battle as a result of British marksmanship, French artillery, and Russian reliance on cold steel.[2]

A great deal has been written about the campaign and the battle, mostly from the British perspective. This essay will view the action from the Russian perspective, concentrating on the impact of the Russian commanders on the battle. The war itself, which allied Great Britain and France for the first time in over two centuries, grew out of Russia's perceived role as protector of Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Great Britain, fearing Russian designs on Constantinople and the threat to Britain's overland route to India, refused to be bought off by the tsar's promise of Egypt as compensation after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. For his part, Napoleon III of France saw the possibility of revenge for 1812 and the occupation of Paris, as well as the solidifying effect a successful war would have on his insecure dynasty.[3] As the allies prepared for war, Russia occupied portions of the old Ottoman Empire.

While the allies fortified Gallipoli in order to defend Constantinople from attack, Russia, under pressure from Austria, withdrew its forces from the Danube. Having unleashed the dogs of war, the allies found it difficult to recall them and decided on a campaign to conquer the Crimea and destroy Sevastopol, Russia's only naval base on the Black Sea. Disembarking nearly 70,000 men at the port of Eupatoria, the allies marched south, the French hugging the sea. Following an inconclusive battle on the Alma River, the allies invested Sevastopol. After suffering through a week of allied bombardment, the Russian commander, Prince Alexander S. Menshikov, without waiting for reinforcements from the mainland, attempted a breakthrough attack against the British rear at Balaclava. Initially capturing several Turkish redoubts, the Russians succeeded in temporarily cutting the only good road between the British and their supply base.[4]

Although the Russian soldiers considered Balaclava a victory, many of Menshikov's senior officers felt the attack, by alerting the allies to the vulnerability in their lines of communication, was a mistake. Had Menshikov waited for reinforcements (the 10th and 11th Divisions) as General Pavel Liprandi, commander of the

12th Division had suggested, the Russian attack probably would have captured the entire British supply base and might have ended the war.

Menshikov, in concert with his senior commanders, decided to continue the offensive and, with the arrival of the additional forces, planned for a two-pronged attack, with one corps from Sevastopol attacking south and another corps from Chorgun attacking west with the object of capturing Sevastopol. Although the Russians enjoyed only a temporary numerical superiority of 90,000 to 71,000 over the allies, a cable from Tsar Nicholas I directed an attack from the Russian left flank, in front of Sevastopol, against the British on Inkerman Heights south of the Chernaya River. Menshikov, who last saw combat in the war of Greek independence against Turkey in 1828 and who distrusted his subordinates and had a low opinion of the Russian "serf" army, changed his original plan to accord with the tsar's wishes—without, however, consulting the generals who would have to execute it.

Menshikov's new plan called for General F. I. Soimonov (commanding the forces from Sevastopol) "to attack the English position" at 0600.[5] Soimonov was to attack to the right after ascending the Careenage Ravine, thus protecting the exposed flank of General P. I. Pavlov's 10th Division, which was to attack south from Inkerman across a bridge that Admiral P. S. Nakhimov's sailors were ordered to construct. Menshikov ordered General P. A. Dannenberg (commander of the newly arrived IV Corps) to remain with the reserves until the forces of Soimonov and Pavlov united, at which point he would take command of the battle. To preclude French reinforcements from General Pierre Bosquet, General Prince P. D. Gorchakov's 22,000-man corps from Chorgun was to fix this French force of about 10,000. Although basically a sound plan, no subsequent objectives were identified, save for a general Russian advance across the entire front in the event the attack met with success. The plan, however, was too complex for the rudimentary Russian command and control systems in use in the mideighteenth century, requiring precise, timely coordination between the three attacking forces.

Defending against this onslaught was a 1,400-man brigade of the Light Division, the 1,350-man Guards Brigade, and the 3,000 men of the 2d Division, along with a small force of pickets guarding Shell Hill. Commencing at 0500,[6] Soimonov's attackers quickly overran the pickets. Then, emplacing heavy artillery (brought from Sevastopol) on the hill, Soimonov shelled the 2d Division's position some 1,400 yards to the south. Responding to the threat of the Russian guns, British General Sir John Pennefather directed his men down the forward slope, rendering Soimonov's barrage harmless. Meanwhile, as he proceeded down the ravine, Soimonov was forced to break up his normal attack formation of three lines of battalion columns into company columns, piecemealing his forces into the teeth of British resistance. Although outnumbered 3 to 1, the British caught the Russians in a crossfire as the attackers reached a plateau in the 2d Division's rear. Without support from Pavlov, whose 20,000-man force was held up at the Chernaya River,7

the tightly packed Russian battalions were broken by intense rifle fire from Pennefather's defenders. Soimonov and his second in command were both killed within thirty minutes, which resulted in near-total confusion as General O. P. Zhabokritskii, who was left to command the reserves, refused to commit his force without approval from Dannenberg.

By the time Dannenberg arrived on the battlefield, Pavlov's force had crossed the river and begun their assault of the British center through the Quarry Ravine. Aided by Zhabokritskii's reserve force of 10,000 men, victory was within the Russians' grasp—until Dannenberg ordered Zhabokritskii to attack the British left, over the objections of all the senior officers present. Despite this missed opportunity for a breakthrough attack against the British center, Pavlov's forces, now personally commanded by Dannenberg, made good headway against the Coldstream Guards, who held the abandoned Sandbag Battery. In an otherwise featureless battlefield, this battery and a cluster of rocks at the head of the Quarry Ravine became the centers of gravity for both attackers and defenders.

A small British force held the rocks, the range and accuracy of their Enfield rifles more than a match for the smoothbore muskets of the Russians. The Coldstream Guards holding the battery did not fare as well. Outnumbered 5 to 1, the 1,300 Guards, reinforced by 700 men from the 2d Division, held against the Russians' murderous assaults (which had been inspired by the death of their beloved Soimonov). Finally, after suffering heavy losses and with their ammunition running out, the Guards withdrew. As the British line broke into individual pockets of resistance, the Russians, supported by their heavy guns at Shell Hill, made furious bayonet charges against it. Numbering only 6,000, the attackers managed to carry the crest, only to be thrown back by the arrival of three French battalions. The battle was still in doubt when Bosquet, realizing that Prince Gorchakov's feeble attack was a mere feint, arrived with the majority of his force to bolster the sagging British defenders. After French artillery silenced the Russian guns on Shell Hill, a determined counterattack by a small British force decided the day. The Russians, with all their guns, retreated to the river and safety. The allies, realizing how close they had come to disaster, dared not pursue. The fighting ended by 1330, and both sides settled into a long winter siege culminating in the fall of Sevastopol on 8 September 1855, nearly eleven months later.

The Russians, fighting on ground of their own choosing and supported by the veterans of three divisions, had achieved complete surprise and had every expectation of victory. Nonetheless, they had been soundly repulsed.

Much of the fault for the Russian defeat can be laid at the feet of the Russian military system. Scornful of superior firepower, it relied on the bayonet charge to achieve victory. Moreover, the Russian cavalry, normally relegated to the role of an internal gendarmerie against domestic unrest, was untrained for ordinary military reconnaissance and economy of force missions. Distrustful of military schol-

arship, relying instead on the school of experience, the Russian system produced leaders who slavishly applied accepted Jominian principles of mass and the battle of annihilation. What is more, by appointing senior commanders (Menshikov, Gorchakov, and Nakhimov) on the basis of family connections—rather than military competence—the system caused valiant soldiers to be sent to needless slaughter by foolish generals. Despite these failures of the Russian military system, Prince Menshikov, as commander in chief of Russian forces in the Crimea, deserves the lion's share of blame for Inkerman.

To begin with, he allowed his original plan, to attack in force from Chorgun to Balaclava, to be changed at the last minute by imperial decree. Such a monumental change would tax a modern army with its extensive planning staff and ample means of communication. Menshikov, who entered the conflict as the minister of the navy, was incapable of the task before him. Distrustful of his commanders and staff, disdainful of the fighting spirit of his soldiers, he failed to brief his subordinates on the changed plan. Menchikov's splitting of General Dannenberg's two divisions and his failure to provide concrete objectives served to piecemeal the initial Russian assault against the British left and center. By ordering Dannenberg to stay on the sidelines until the two wings joined, Menchikov ensured a disunity of command and forced the corps commander to make a critical decision as to the final objective without having a feel for the ebb and flow of the fighting. And by entrusting the vital feint from Chorgun to the aging and overcautious Prince Gorchakov (instead of General Liprandi, the division commander), Menshikov allowed the French to disregard the potential threat of this 22,000-man force and to reinforce the British position when it had reached its breaking point. Menshikov, the only one who fully understood the concept of operation, stationed himself well to the rear, effectively removed from the decision-making process the fighting required. Thus, he was not accessible to commit the 9,000-man reserve of the IV Corps as Dannenberg personally led the final assault against the British center. Nor was Menshikov able to commit the 4,000 men stationed at the Mackenzie farm (northeast of Inkerman) to repel a possible, though improbable, allied attack to the north.

Viewing the battle from a tactical perspective shows yet more failings of Menshikov's leadership. No detailed reconnaissance of the battlefield was conducted by Russian cavalry, and there were no accurate maps of the terrain made available. The ground Menshikov chose to fight on proved disastrous for the Russians. To reach the British center, the attacking force from Sevastopol had to approach the battlefield through the restrictive terrain of the Careenage Ravine and climb the steep heights of the British position. The attack on the British right forced IV Corps to attack over steep roads through the equally difficult Quarry Ravine, from the Chernaya River to the heights. Furthermore, the terrain covered by the main attack precluded the Russian artillery from rapid movement forward to provide essential fire support for the infantry. Though not made in earnest, the feint

of Gorchakov's force from Chorgun would have been made against the nearly impregnable French fortifications near Balaclava Heights.

Though the superiority of British rifles to Russian muskets was amply demonstrated by several engagements prior to Inkerman, Menshikov did not consider this evidence in his plan of attack. In addition, repeated reliance on bayonet attacks resulted in high Russian casualties in proportion to the allies. Furthermore, the disregard for British marksmanship resulted in the death or wounding of nearly all the Russian regimental and battalion officers, further adding to the confusion of the Russian attackers. Although the large numbers of allied wounded received less than mediocre treatment in their hospitals, the Russians received even worse care from their overtaxed hospital system. Menshikov falsely blamed the defeat on the lack of courage shown by the Russian soldier[8] and did nothing to improve the medical system. He had no clear vision of the Crimean campaign, save to defend Sevastopol until the Russian Navy came to the rescue. Menshikov also displayed no concept of combined combat operations, but relied on unsupported infantry to capture several highly fortified allied positions. Nor did he have a grasp of the superior weaponry his enemy brought to the contest. Further, he made no attempt to articulate his intent to his subordinates and established a chain of command that deprived the senior commander of a feel for the battle. Although he had numerous opportunities to concentrate his considerable reserves to assure victory, Menshikov was not present at critical times to exploit those opportunities. In short, a study of Menshikov's leadership at the Battle of Inkerman becomes a study of all the wrong things a commander can do and their disastrous results.

In the final analysis, the importance of the Russian debacle at Inkerman cannot be overstated. Despite their victory, the allies feared that a Russian renewal of the attack of the 5th would drive them back into the sea. So desperate was the British position that Lord Clarendon, England's foreign secretary, wrote to Lord Cowley, England's ambassador to Paris: "Everyone is downhearted about the victory (if it was one) and feels that another such triumph, or another such attack, would finally smash us, and then will come the monster catastrophe—a horrible compound of Afghanistan and Corunna."[9]

The arrival of allied reinforcements, the building of a rail system from Balaclava to the siege lines around Sevastopol, and the might of the French and British fleets secured final victory for the allies. The Treaty of Paris, signed in February of 1856 by the new tsar, Alexander II, lasted only fifteen years and had a lone tangible result—the exclusion of the Russian fleet from the Black Sea.

NOTES

1. John Laffin, *Brassey's Battles: 3,500 years of Conflict, Campaigns, and War from A-Z* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1976), 75.
2. Russian tactics revolved around Suvorov's eighteenth-century maxim, "The bullet's a fool, the bayonet's a fine lad," Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 3.
3. Paul A. Gagnon, *France Since 1789* (New York, 1962), 177—79.
4. Faithful to the tradition of Wellington, who "never lost a British gun," the British commander, Lord Raglan sent the famous order through Captain Nolan to Lord Cardigan of the Light Brigade to recapture the redoubts, resulting in perhaps the most heroic yet useless episode in British military history. Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Reason Why* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), 224—26.
5. John Shelton Curtiss, *Russia's Crimean War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1979), 322.
6. Contrary to Menshikov's orders, Dannenberg ordered Soimonov to attack one hour earlier.
7. Admiral Nakhimov failed to build the bridge, possibly because Dannenberg had ordered Pavlov to build it. Curtiss, 325—26.
8. Ibid., 333.
9. F. A. Wellesley, ed., *The Paris Embassy During the Second Empire* (London, 1928), 63.

VII. Battle Command Incompetencies: John C. Pemberton in the Vicksburg Campaign

Dr. Christopher R. Gabel

The issue of generalship in the American Civil War has long been a topic of unrelenting research, voluminous writing, and impassioned debate. Many historians and buffs have postulated that superior generalship was the key factor that enabled the Confederacy to offset the Union's advantages in men and materiel. General Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia would certainly seem to validate such a claim, but west of the Appalachian Mountains the story was very different. Confederate generals in Tennessee (A. S. Johnston, Beauregard, Bragg, and J. E. Johnston) demonstrated nothing like Lee's abilities and compiled a record in which defeats outnumbered victories. And in Mississippi, Confederate Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton was thoroughly outgeneraled and suffered a defeat more decisive than any sustained by Lee's opponents in Virginia. As a case study in "battle command incompetency," Pemberton stands unrivaled in the Civil War; he failed more dramatically than did any other commander of comparable stature in either army. Were he serving today, Pemberton could be found wanting in each of the five "battle command competencies" commonly subscribed to in today's Army.

See the Enemy

At the opening of the 1863 campaign season, Pemberton was able to see his enemy with little difficulty. From his headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi, he was well situated to monitor Union activity throughout his department, which embraced all of Mississippi and that part of Louisiana east of the Mississippi River. Pemberton's main concern was with Major General Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee, which had three corps encamped in the river bottom west of the Mississippi and upstream from Vicksburg. It was obvious that Grant's objective was Vicksburg, the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy," which had been thoroughly fortified against both river-borne and overland assaults. However, Pemberton had also to concern himself with Union penetrations out of Tennessee, far to the north, and with the defense of Port Hudson, Louisiana, well to the south. There remained also the possibility that Grant, utilizing river transport, could slip away from Vicksburg and reinforce another theater of the war.

But as long as Grant's men languished in their sodden camps in the Mississippi flood plain, Pemberton had the situation well in hand. In order to reach Vicksburg, Grant's soldiers would have to scale the 200-feet-high bluffs that marked the flood plain's eastern boundary. And even to reach the bluffs, Grant would have to contend with swamps, bayous, and rivers—not to mention Confederate defenders. From February to April, Grant made a number of attempts to reach the high ground,

utilizing secondary rivers and bayous swollen by floodwaters. Pemberton was kept well informed of these bayou expeditions, and those that nature did not frustrate, Confederate troops did.

However, in April, Pemberton suffered a catastrophic lapse in his ability to see the enemy. Grant's failures to date, linked with reports of unusual Union riverboat activity, led Pemberton to conclude erroneously that Grant was about to withdraw from the Vicksburg vicinity. On 9 April, Pemberton reported to the War Department in Richmond: "Also reported, but not yet confirmed, movement under McClernand, in large force, by land west of river and southward. Much doubt it."[1]

The movement was real and represented the opening of the campaign that would doom Vicksburg. With the corps commanded by Major General John McClernand in the lead, Grant was even then in the process of moving his command to a point where he could cross the Mississippi south of Vicksburg. On the night of 16—17 April, Admiral David D. Porter ran a portion of his gunboat fleet downstream, past the Vicksburg batteries, toward a linkup with Grant's ground troops.

The presence of both naval and land forces downstream from Vicksburg should have commanded Pemberton's complete and undivided attention because, in effect, the joint Union forces were in a position to turn the flank of fortress Vicksburg. Pemberton, however, persistently refused to see the threat for what it was. He was distracted by enemy diversions elsewhere in his large department. Even a warning from his most reliable subordinate, Brigadier General John S. Bowen, failed to orient the bewildered Pemberton. Bowen cautioned: "all the movements of the enemy during the last twenty-four hours [26—27 April] seem to indicate an intention on their part to march their army still lower down in Louisiana, perhaps to Saint Joseph, and then to run their steamers by me and cross to Rodney [Mississippi]."[2] Bowen's predicted landing site for the Union forces was off by less than ten miles, but when Grant brought ashore 22,000 men at Bruinsburg on 30 April, there were no Confederates to meet them.

Seeing Yourself

The arrival of Grant's main force on the east bank of the Mississippi should have triggered a major shift in Pemberton's perception of himself. Up to this point in the campaign, Pemberton had functioned as a department commander, essentially an administrator working through the bureaucracy of his department. He had not personally commanded any of the military activities to date, preferring instead to allocate resources to local commanders and allow them to conduct operations. However, with Grant at hand, it was time to make the transition from department administrator to field army commander. Pemberton's department contained no fewer than 60,000 troops to contest Grant's designs, if only those troops could be assembled and led decisively.

Pemberton was slow to change his self-perceptions. He had remained at his headquarters in Jackson when Union gunboats bombarded Grand Gulf on 29 April. He was still in Jackson the next day when Grant's troops came ashore unopposed. On 1 May, he finally moved his headquarters—not toward the enemy, but to Vicksburg. When Brigadier General Bowen confronted Grant near Port Gibson that day, the Confederate force of four brigades was outnumbered 3 to 1. Significant Confederate reinforcements reached the area only after Bowen was defeated. Even then, these forces did little to interfere with Grant as he consolidated his foothold in Mississippi. Pemberton himself remained in Vicksburg. He did not come out in the field to join his army until 13 May, by which time Grant's army, three corps strong, was on the move.

It is worth noting at this juncture that Pemberton, although a lieutenant general, had never commanded a force of any size in battle. The last time he had heard shots fired in anger was during the Mexican War. Not surprisingly, events were soon to prove that Pemberton, a competent administrator, was out of his depth as an army commander.

Seeing the Terrain

In his rather belatedly assumed role as field commander, Pemberton saw the terrain only as it applied to the immediate requirements of a tactical defense. Two elements of terrain commanded his attention: the stronghold of Vicksburg, which constituted his base of supply and which represented the strongest defensive terrain in the region by virtue of its fortifications; and the Big Black River, a significant water obstacle, but one that could be crossed at several places. With Grant's army loose in the interior of Mississippi (Pemberton did not know exactly where), Pemberton disposed his army so as to extract the maximum defensive potential from the terrain. Of his five divisions, Pemberton left two in Vicksburg to guard against potential river-borne assaults. The remainder of his force, he established, for the most part, in defensive positions on the west bank of the Big Black River. This kept a water obstacle between his army and Grant and left his field force within easy reach of his fall-back position, the Vicksburg fortifications.

In a tactical sense, Pemberton used the terrain well. Operationally, he had set the stage for his eventual defeat. The Big Black River, which protected his army from Grant, also protected Grant's force from the Confederates. By simply screening the Big Black crossings, Grant was free to turn inland and menace the railroad linking Pemberton with the rest of the Confederacy. Pemberton's subordinate, John Bowen, once again viewed the situation more perceptively than did Pemberton. He offered to move his division forward to a position between the Big Black and the city of Jackson. "Could we not thus preserve the entire railroad, as well as the [Big Black River] bridge?" Bowen queried.[3]

The records contain no indication that Pemberton took any notice of this advice. As a consequence, Grant's forces on 14 May cut the railroad and captured Jackson, with Pemberton offering no resistance. Grant had isolated Vicksburg for the kill.

Visualizing the Battle

At this juncture, Pemberton proved incapable of settling upon a course of action and seeing it through. In the words of Captain Samuel Lockett, Pemberton's chief engineer, Pemberton "made the capital mistake of trying to harmonize instructions from his superiors diametrically opposed to each other, and at the same time bring them into accord with his own judgement, which was adverse to the plans of both."[4]

Pemberton wanted to remain on the defensive along the Big Black and accept battle there. A message from Jefferson Davis, the Confederate president, seemed to suggest that Pemberton should withdraw to the Vicksburg fortifications. J. E. Johnston, theater commander, wanted Pemberton to let go of Vicksburg altogether until sufficient force could be gathered to defeat Grant. According to Lockett, "none of these plans was carried out, but a sort of compromise or compound of all of these."[5]

On 16 May, while Pemberton vacillated (much to the disgust of his subordinates), Grant simplified the problem by bringing on a general engagement in the vicinity of Champion Hill. The onset of what proved to be the decisive battle of the campaign found Pemberton without a vision of battle. This is not surprising, insofar as the battle was, from his point of view, both unanticipated and unwanted. Pemberton's army was poorly disposed for battle when the fighting began, and as the day advanced, the inexperienced lieutenant general handled his army poorly. His only vision of battle was to extricate his force from impending disaster, which he succeeded in doing at day's end (although one of three Confederate divisions engaged was cut off and lost to Pemberton). Although the Confederates were outnumbered (23,000 to 32,000), their defeat was due not to the number of muskets engaged but to the absence of effective leadership at the top.

Seeing into the Future

Throughout the Vicksburg campaign, Pemberton had demonstrated an inability to see beyond short-term exigencies. Following the defeat at Champion Hill, Pemberton saw no option but to withdraw into Vicksburg, which was accomplished on 18 May. There, the shaken Confederate army was able to reconstitute and resupply in the safety of a fortress. Indeed, Pemberton's men were able to drive off Union assaults on 19 and 22 May, testifying to the short-term benefits of reconstitution inside the fortifications. In the long term, however, by allowing himself to become besieged in Vicksburg, Pemberton abdicated all responsibility for the future. He considered his duty to consist solely in holding the ramparts until help from outside intervened. That help never materialized. On 17 May, Johnston had

tried to get Pemberton to look into the future, advising him, "If . . . you are invested in Vicksburg, you must ultimately surrender."[6] Johnston's prediction came true on 4 July 1863.

Conclusions

Although it is inherently unfair to judge a Civil War general by 1993 standards, John C. Pemberton's failure as a commander is incontrovertible. The reason behind his failure is also fairly easy to discern. In short, Pemberton never had an opportunity to grow into the job of leading a field army in battle. His experience prior to 1863 was in the staff and administrative arena. His promotion to three-star rank was due to patronage and administrative competence, not to performance under fire. Thus it was that on 16 May 1863, Pemberton, a three-star novice, found himself locked in battle with one of the Union's best commanders. Beset by conflicting guidance, disgruntled subordinates, and his own lack of experience, Pemberton conducted himself bravely and honorably. To the end, however, he was never truly a commander.

NOTES

1. Message from J. C. Pemberton to Gen. S. Cooper, 9 April 1863, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 24, pt. 3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1881), 730.
2. Message from Jno. S. Bowen to Asst. AG, 27 April 1863, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 24, pt. 3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1881), 792—93.
3. Message from Jno. S. Bowen to Asst. AG, 11 May 1863, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 24, pt. 3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1881), 855.
4. Richard Wheeler, *The Siege of Vicksburg* (New York: Harper, 1991), 144.
5. Ibid.
6. Message from J. E. Johnston to LTG Pemberton, 17 May 1863, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 24, pt. 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1881), 272.

VIII. William S. Rosecrans and Battle Command Competencies

Dr. William Glenn Robertson

Warfare in the last quarter of the twentieth century has become dazzlingly complex. Massive technological change has produced a wide variety of weapons systems with greatly enhanced destructive powers. New technologies, in turn, beget new force structures and new theories of employment. All of these changes occur at a rate so rapid that the tempo of change threatens to overwhelm the capability of individuals to comprehend, adjust, and maintain control. Various means can be used to provide an anchor of stability in this sea of change. One solution is the clear and timely statement of standard operating procedures and doctrine. Another is the development of computer-based simulations to provide indications of how actual events will unfold. Both doctrine and simulations are useful tools and can enhance preparation for warfighting, but because they tend to deal in the coin of certainty rather than the currency of ambiguity, too much reliance upon them alone may provide a false picture of the factors that shape events.

Helpful as they are, doctrinal publications and simulations do not replicate reality in at least one critical area—the human factors that vary widely from individual to individual and do not lend themselves to quantification. Among these factors are courage, fear, fatigue, and personality differences. Warfighting technologies change over the years, forcing structural and doctrinal change to occur also. Human factors, however, change either not at all or so slowly that they can almost be considered timeless. Too messy to fit into neat categories, too random to quantify successfully, these human factors nevertheless affect military operations as surely as weapons systems and logistical capabilities. Human factors are by no means the only factors to be considered in the conduct of a campaign, but commanders who ignore them run a grave risk. Nowhere is this more true than among senior commanders who must not only see the enemy, the terrain, the battle, and the future but must also have a clear vision of themselves.

An excellent example of a senior commander who had difficulty in clearly seeing either himself or his enemy is Major General William Starke Rosecrans during the Chickamauga campaign of 1863. Born 6 September 1819 in Ohio, Rosecrans graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1842, placing fifth in a class of fifty-six. For the next twelve years he served uneventfully as an engineer, missing the Mexican-American War entirely. In 1854, he resigned his commission to become a businessman and inventor. His new career was no more successful than his previous one and, indeed, almost killed him when an experiment failed catastrophically. When the American Civil War broke out, Rosecrans returned to the military profession and soon found the success that had heretofore eluded him. Appointed brigadier general in June 1861, he served with distinction

in western Virginia, then transferred to the Western theater. There he held a series of semi-independent commands and successfully fought the battles of Iuka and Corinth. Promoted to major general in September 1862, Rosecrans replaced Major General Don Carlos Buell in command of the Army of the Cumberland in October. Charged with driving Confederate forces from central and eastern Tennessee, he took the first step by defeating the Army of Tennessee at Stones River in December 1862.

Like all commanders, Rosecrans was a mixture of both positive and negative traits. Even his detractors admitted he had a brilliant mind, was articulate in speech, and was firm in his convictions. He was also physically courageous and possessed prodigious energy. Unfortunately, he was extremely nervous and excitable in temperament. He was also impatient and critical of those who disagreed with him. In the words of a contemporary, Rosecrans was "short of temper and long of tongue." He was also remarkably simple of outlook, neither introspective nor an astute judge of others. His stern, uncompromising sense of the absolute correctness of his own views, once adopted, made him self-righteous in the extreme. In sum, he could relate to others, but had difficulty in understanding them or their positions. In terms of command style, he was generally affable with subordinates but tended to involve himself in details more appropriately handled by his staff. Never an early riser, he preferred to work long past midnight, then to engage in serious philosophical discussions for relaxation. During campaigns, he slept little and became more nervous and excitable as the tempo of operations accelerated. In a short campaign like Stones River, he was able to maintain the pace, but a campaign of longer duration would severely test his physical stamina.

Rosecrans embarked on just such an extended campaign in the summer of 1863. After Stones River, he spent the next six months reorganizing and refitting his army. Finally, on 24 June, he put the Army of the Cumberland into motion. Feinting toward the Confederate left with his cavalry and his reserves, Rosecrans sent his three primary infantry corps around the Confederate right. In four days General Braxton Bragg's Confederates were forced back to their advanced base at Tullahoma, Tennessee. Again Rosecrans turned the Confederate right, causing Bragg to withdraw hastily south of both the Cumberland Plateau and the Tennessee River. At a cost of only 560 casualties, Rosecrans had virtually forced Bragg out of Tennessee. With the Confederates momentarily beyond his reach, the Union general now called a temporary halt to operations. Subsequent phases of the campaign would occur in a sparsely settled mountainous region. Thus, the Army of the Cumberland was forced to depend upon the single-track Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad for most of its supplies, supplementing them only with whatever corn could be found in the river valleys.

The pause that followed the Tullahoma phase of the campaign lasted for six weeks. During that time, the Army of the Cumberland rebuilt the railroad to the Tennessee River, established large stocks of food and ammunition, and waited for

the corn to ripen. Finally, on 16 August, Rosecrans ordered the army to cross the Cumberland Plateau and enter the valley of the Tennessee River. A formidable obstacle, the river averaged 1,250 feet in width, making it too wide to cross at a defended spot. Rosecrans thus designed an elaborate deception operation north of Chattanooga to deceive the Confederates into believing he would cross there. In fact, he planned to cross the river at four sites downstream from the city. Once across, the army would make a wide-front advance on three axes that would not only threaten Chattanooga itself but would also place Bragg's railroad to Atlanta in jeopardy. Rosecrans believed that Bragg would have to respond to the potential loss of his line of communication by evacuating Chattanooga, possibly without a fight. He implemented the deception operation on 21 August and planned to begin the real crossings eight days later.

Completely fooled by the Federal demonstrations north of Chattanooga, Bragg and his senior subordinates all expected the Federal crossing to take place in that sector. Thus, when the Army of the Cumberland began to cross the river at Shellmound, Battle Creek, Bridgeport, and Caperton's Ferry, it met virtually no resistance. By 4 September, Rosecrans had successfully completed the passage of the river and had concentrated his units into three powerful columns.

All of the columns faced two massive barrier ridges, Sand and Lookout Mountains, between them and their objectives. These two mountains were traversed by a series of passes or gaps: the first near Chattanooga, the second twenty miles to the south, and the third another twenty miles south of the second. Rosecrans directed one infantry corps to follow each of the routes over the ridges. On the left, the XXI Corps pointed directly toward Chattanooga; in the center, the XIV Corps headed for the town of LaFayette, Georgia; on the right, the XX Corps and the Cavalry Corps drove toward Rome, Georgia, and the railroad to Atlanta. The cross-compartmented mountainous terrain prevented the three columns from operating within supporting distance of each other, but Rosecrans believed the risk was minimal. Bragg must withdraw, he reasoned, in order to protect his communications.

By 9 September, the Army of the Cumberland had struggled over Sand Mountain, and its leading elements were beginning to cross Lookout Mountain. As Rosecrans had expected, Bragg felt compelled to evacuate Chattanooga, which he did on 8 September. Learning that the city was open, Rosecrans sent the XXI Corps to occupy it on 9 September. With the objective of the campaign in his hands, Rosecrans expansively ordered a rapid pursuit of what he believed to be a defeated foe. Calling his most senior corps commander, Major General George Thomas, to his headquarters to arrange details of the pursuit, Rosecrans was dismayed to learn that Thomas did not share his enthusiasm. In fact, Thomas vigorously argued against immediate pursuit: the army was too widely dispersed and its lines of communication were extremely tenuous. Instead, Thomas favored a pause to consolidate both the army and fresh supplies at Chattanooga before resuming the

campaign. Thomas' arguments notwithstanding, Rosecrans adamantly rejected the idea of a pause and directed the corps to pursue the retreating Confederates independently. Rosecrans believed his vision of Bragg's situation and was unwilling to entertain any opposing views. Thus the pursuit began.

Contrary to Rosecrans' expectations, Bragg's Army of Tennessee was not in wild retreat toward Atlanta. Knowing that he could not contest the line of the Tennessee River, Bragg had planned all along to wait for the Federals to become dispersed in the mountains before he mounted a counterstroke. Late on 9 September, when he learned that leading elements of the XIV Corps were entering a mountain-rimmed valley named McLemore's Cove, Bragg attempted to orchestrate their destruction by converging columns. Through a combination of Federal good luck and Confederate ineptitude, two Federal divisions narrowly escaped annihilation. Upon learning of the near disaster, Rosecrans at first was disinclined to believe the news. Finally, on 12 September, he ordered a concentration of his scattered units. By that time, more than forty miles separated the XXI Corps on the left from the XX Corps on the right, and the actual distance through the mountains was far greater. Rosecrans would be unable to concentrate the Army of the Cumberland until 18 September, and even then it was not in position to defend Chattanooga.

Following the action in McLemore's Cove, the initiative in the campaign passed completely to the Confederates. After failing on 13 September to again destroy a portion of the Federal army, Bragg finally precipitated a major battle on 19 September. By that time Rosecrans was on the verge of physical collapse because of emotional stress and lack of sleep. After a day of inconclusive battle, the Army of the Cumberland held its ground, although it was unable to take the offensive. Still unwilling to recognize his physical limitations, Rosecrans spent most of the evening engaged in a long conference with his subordinates. Rising at dawn, he inspected his battle line several times, making minute adjustments. When the Confederates resumed their attacks, he frenetically issued orders to units as small as brigades. His physical condition, coupled with his predisposition toward overcontrol, soon led him to make a mental error. Believing that a dangerous gap existed in his line, he ordered a divisional movement that opened a hole instead of closing one. This rash decision caused one-third of his army to collapse and flee the field, carrying him with them. Although the bulk of the Army of the Cumberland remained intact under George Thomas, it eventually withdrew into Chattanooga. Within a month, Rosecrans was relieved of command. He would hold other commands during the war, but the pinnacle of his military career was past.

In terms of what today are called Battlefield Command Competencies, William S. Rosecrans failed in two important respects. In the first instance, "Seeing the Enemy," Rosecrans saw his opponents as he wanted them to be, instead of assessing what they were capable of doing. Even when told by a trusted subordinate that an alternate view of the enemy was equally credible, he rejected the possibility that

things were not as they appeared. He thus lost the initiative at a critical moment in the campaign and never regained it. In the second instance, "Seeing Yourself," Rosecrans was equally insensitive to an important reality—the progressive degrading of his own physical and emotional condition. Rosecrans' personal habit of "late to bed, late to rise" was not harmful between campaigns but was utterly inappropriate as the tempo of operations accelerated. Although copious expenditures of adrenaline kept him going physically, it did nothing to halt the rapid decline of his mental acuity. Rosecrans was either unaware of his deteriorating condition or believed he could overcome its effects by sheer force of will. Either way, he was found wanting at the crisis of the battle and thereby lost both the fight and his career.

IX. Major General Gordon Granger at Chickamauga, 20 September 1863

Major Scott R. McMeen

If the ability to make a quick and accurate assessment of a tactical situation is the essence of good generalship, then Major General Gordon Granger deserves high marks for his performance on the second day of the Battle of Chickamauga. During that fateful day, Granger made two tactical decisions that saved a large part of the Union Army of the Cumberland from destruction and allowed the bulk of Federal forces to make an orderly retreat. Detracting from his brilliance, however, were two lapses of judgment that caused unnecessary Union losses and suggest that Granger's leadership was seriously flawed. When dealing with his own command and executing his primary mission, Granger's focus and decisiveness produced outstanding results. But once the tactical situation required him to take a larger view and deal with problems beyond the narrow scope of his own force, his performance proved inadequate.

The Battle of Chickamauga was the culmination of more than a month of maneuvering and skirmishing between Union Major General William S. Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland and General Braxton Bragg's Confederate Army of Tennessee. The two armies began the campaign in late August 1863 positioned on opposite banks of the Tennessee River near Chattanooga. Rosecrans' objective was to capture the vital rail junction of Chattanooga, essential as a communications base for any Federal advance into Georgia. Rather than assault the city directly, however, Rosecrans feinted east of Chattanooga and then crossed the bulk of his army well to the west, advancing along three widely separated routes. The southernmost of these columns was soon in a position to threaten Bragg's rail communications with his supply depots in Atlanta. Rosecrans believed that this threat to the rebel supply line would cause Bragg to give up Chattanooga without a fight. He was correct. Bragg responded by abandoning his positions and retreating. But then Bragg seized the initiative, concentrating his army near Lafayette, Georgia (roughly twenty-five miles south of Chattanooga) and attacking the widely separated Union columns one at a time. Command and control problems, however, prevented him from launching an effective attack. Meanwhile, Rosecrans became alert to the danger posed by the dispersal of his forces. The Federals now raced north to concentrate near Chattanooga, while Bragg absorbed reinforcements and perfected plans for blocking their retreat. On 19 September 1863, the two armies collided on the west side of Chickamauga Creek.

On the first day of the battle, the Union and Confederate forces fought each other to a standstill, neither side executing a coordinated battle plan but merely grappling in a confused meeting engagement. The heavily wooded terrain made it nearly impossible for higher-level commanders to get a clear picture of what was happen-

ing. As a result, division and brigade commanders made most of the important tactical decisions, reacting as they saw fit to the situation in their immediate area. While the battle raged, Granger and elements of his Reserve Corps waited in the vicinity of McAfee Church, four miles northeast of the battlefield and just seven miles southeast of Chattanooga.

Granger commanded three infantry brigades, each with a supporting battery of field artillery. Two of the brigades belonged to Brigadier General James B. Steedman's 1st Division; the third brigade, commanded by Colonel Daniel McCook, was attached to Steedman from the 2d Division. Thus, Granger had only one division to direct and one division commander to supervise. The majority of his command was scattered across south-central Tennessee, guarding the Army of the Cumberland's line of communications.

Granger's mission was to guard the vital route to Chattanooga, keeping the door open for the army's main body should it be forced to retreat. On the night of 19 September, Rosecrans' chief of staff, Brigadier General James A. Garfield, amended Granger's orders, directing him to "help . . . in the fight tomorrow by supporting [Major General George] Thomas."[1] (Thomas commanded the Union left wing.) Granger received no further instructions from Union Army headquarters during the course of the battle. The only messages he received on 20 September were one regarding the suitability of the McAfee Church position for defense and another, from Thomas, asking if Granger's command was within supporting distance.[2]

At approximately 1100 on 20 September, Granger made the first of his brilliant tactical decisions. Aware of the absence of enemy activity in his own area and hearing the sounds of battle to his southeast, he weighed the meaning of Garfield's instructions and, in order to support Thomas, marched to the battle with two brigades of Steedman's 1st Division.[3] McCook's brigade stayed behind to carry out the original mission of guarding the route to Chattanooga. Granger's decision was fortuitous indeed. At roughly the same time that Granger and Steedman marched to the battlefield, a massive column of Confederate troops charged through a gap in the Union right wing. The Federal positions on the southern half of the field quickly collapsed. Steedman's division would be sorely needed in a very short time.

As Granger approached the battlefield, he was opposed by a brigade of dismounted cavalry and three batteries of horse artillery led by Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest.[4] Steedman, threatened on his left, deployed his 1st Division against the Confederates. Granger now made his second brilliant decision of the day. He directed Steedman to get his men back into column and continue the march toward the main battle. "They [Forrest's men] are nothing but ragamuffin cavalry," Granger allegedly told Steedman in evaluating the situation.[5] Granger's assessment, while uncomplimentary to Forrest's troopers, was an accurate calcu-

lation of relative combat power. Forrest lacked the strength to close with Steedman's division, so he limited his interdiction attempt to long-range artillery and rifle fire, hoping to distract the column and make it face him rather than reinforce the main battle. Granger, much to his credit, remained focused on his main purpose: the support of Thomas. To escape Forrest's fire, Granger directed his column to veer west away from the Union batteries. This modification to the approach march luckily caused Steedman's division to enter the battlefield almost precisely where it was needed.[6]

At approximately 1345,[7] Granger reported to Thomas, who by this time was the senior Federal officer on the field (Rosecrans had been swept off the field with the routed troops of the Union right wing). Thomas ordered Granger's troops to reinforce the hastily reformed Union right that now defended a small eminence known as Snodgrass Hill. Granger's men arrived just in time to counter a renewed Confederate assault on the vulnerable Union right flank. The troops of Steedman's 1st Division, although largely without combat experience, charged into Brigadier General Bushrod Johnson's Confederate division and drove it from Snodgrass Hill. Without the timely arrival of Steedman's division, Johnson's Confederates could have launched a devastating flank attack on the Union forces occupying the eastern half of Snodgrass Hill, unhinging the entire Federal position and causing a much more serious Union defeat.

Steedman's arrival solved another pressing problem for the Army of the Cumberland, that of ammunition resupply. Steedman's ammunition wagons carried some 95,000 rounds.[8] Since the Federal regiments holding out on Snodgrass Hill were mostly survivors of the army's right wing, they had lost their combat trains in the chaos following the right wing's collapse. By the time Steedman arrived, these soldiers had nearly emptied their cartridge boxes. Hence, the arrival of additional ammunition was as vital to maintaining the Federal position as was Steedman's arrival with two fresh brigades.

Granger's two tactical decisions—to go to Thomas' aid in force and to ignore Forrest's cavalry—delivered his force to the battle at precisely the right time and place, enabling the Union forces to maintain a cohesive defense and allowing most of the Army of the Cumberland to avoid capture. Unfortunately, Granger then ceased to act as a competent commander. Having delivered his command to battle expertly, he indulged himself in his favorite battlefield pastime: acting as a cannoneer. Seeing the many batteries arrayed near the Snodgrass cabin blasting away at the Confederates, Granger could not resist the urge to grab a rammer staff and join the fun. Granger spent most of the afternoon happily loading and firing cannons—content to let his subordinates manage the battle on their own.[9]

Steedman and his brigade and regimental commanders performed well enough without Granger's supervision. Steedman gallantly led the charge up Snodgrass Hill, personally rallying a regiment that had begun to waver. Once in position,

Steedman's division successfully resisted subsequent Confederate assaults. The brave but disorganized fragments of regiments and brigades that occupied the eastern end of Snodgrass Hill also continued to hold out effectively, but these units sorely needed direction.

At approximately 1630, Thomas decided to withdraw his army. While he directed the withdrawal from Kelly Field, he left Granger to supervise the withdrawal of Federal units from Snodgrass Hill.[10] No operation is more difficult than a withdrawal under pressure. Close coordination and supervision are essential for success. Incredibly, Granger made no effort to organize and direct this dangerous operation.[11] He merely relayed the withdrawal order and then departed the battlefield. He failed to realize that he had a responsibility to the units outside of his corps. His official report of the battle reveals: "*Although they were not under my command* [author's emphasis], I cannot refrain from herein noticing the troops that held (Snodgrass Hill), and from testifying to their heroic bravery . . ."[12] When Thomas left for Kelly Field, Granger was indisputably the senior officer on Snodgrass Hill and was responsible for all of the Union forces there.

Fortunately for the Army of the Cumberland, the Confederate soldiers attacking Snodgrass Hill were nearly exhausted and did little to interfere with the Federal withdrawal. Union regiments that were still part of organized brigades and under the control of their commanders withdrew successfully to Chattanooga. Three Union regiments that were attachments from other commands and "strangers" to the brigades and divisions that fought beside them on Snodgrass Hill were left behind and captured by the Confederates. Had Granger, as senior officer, organized and supervised the Federal withdrawal, all of these units would probably have escaped. If their sacrifice was deemed a tactical necessity to ensure the rest of the army's safety, these brave men at least deserved to be told why they were being left behind. In any case, these soldiers were poorly served by their leadership, and Granger, as the senior commander, was largely responsible for their fate.

Granger's performance at Chickamauga was decidedly mixed. On the one hand, he made a pair of tactical decisions that saved the day for the Army of the Cumberland. Once his command arrived on the battlefield, however, Granger revealed characteristics that call into question his fitness for command. First, his fascination for cannons distracted him from the proper business of a corps commander. Second, he lacked any sense of responsibility toward anything that lay outside the narrow purview of his own command. The same superb sense of focus that caused Granger to ignore Forrest's cavalry also caused him to ignore anything that lay outside his own mission. Having delivered his troops to the point directed by Thomas, Granger was without an immediate mission to perform and appeared disinclined to seek another. The disorganized Union forces on Snodgrass Hill desperately needed an overall commander. Granger, a corps commander without a corps to command, was perfectly situated to provide the necessary coordination and direction. Granger may have been guilty of the sin, so common among leaders,

of staying within his "comfort zone," doing only those duties that appealed to him. While Granger was relatively new to corps command, he had no problems maneuvering a division, as illustrated by his march to the battlefield. But when faced with the choice of supervising a disorganized group of Federals (of roughly corps strength) hotly engaged with the enemy or sponging out cannons, he unhesitatingly chose the latter.

What lessons can be gleaned from Granger at Chickamauga? First, his performance clearly illustrates the insufficiency of tactical brilliance, alone, as the dominating quality in an effective commander. While this quality is essential, it does not, by itself, make a great, or even good, leader. Second, a leader who cannot see beyond the narrow interests of his own command and his immediate mission is really a poor leader. Good leaders must have the moral courage to take responsibility in difficult situations, even when it calls on them to perform tasks that may be complex and unfamiliar. Though leaders have the right to delegate duties to subordinates, this does not nullify their responsibility to accomplish difficult and unpleasant jobs. Leaders should do their jobs—even if that means making mistakes and risking embarrassment or failure. Certainly the courageous men of the 21st Ohio, 22d Michigan, and 89th Ohio—the "lost regiments" of Chickamauga—deserved as much from Major General Gordon Granger.

NOTES

1. Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 438.
2. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, vol. 30, pt. 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1899), reprint (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1988), hereafter referred to as *OR*, 69, 139—40.
3. The questions of whether or not Granger acted without orders in marching to join Thomas and who was responsible for making the decision to march to the battle are still hotly debated. The following sources present the main arguments: J. S. Fullerton, "Reinforcing Thomas at Chickamauga," in Robert U. Johnson, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, vol. 3 (New York: Century, 1888), 666; Glenn Tucker, *Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), 340—41; and Cozzens, 440.
4. Cozzens, 441.
5. Ibid., 442.
6. William G. Robertson, *Staff Ride Handbook for the Battle of Chickamauga* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1992), 105.
7. Cozzens, 443.
8. Ibid., 453.
9. Archibald Gracie, *The Truth About Chickamauga* (Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1911), 139—40.
10. Cozzens, 477.
11. Gracie, 143—48.
12. *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 1, 856.

X. Senior-Level Leadership at the Battle of the Crater

Major Ralph D. Nichols

Union frontal assaults on entrenched, yet sparsely manned, Confederate positions around Petersburg faltered in the late spring of 1864, and the warfare bogged down into a defensive stalemate. Meanwhile, both sides strengthened and extended their siege lines. By late June, the Union lines in Major General Ambrose E. Burnside's IX Corps sector stabilized to within 130 yards of the Confederate works. Major General George G. Meade had only recently integrated Burnside's IX Corps into his Army of the Potomac. Like many other Union officers, Meade had a low opinion of Burnside due to the latter's infamous defeat at Fredericksburg in 1862.

In late June, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Pleasants of the 48th Pennsylvania Regiment conceived a plan to emplace a huge mine under a Confederate fortification known as Elliot's salient as a means of breaking the impasse on the Petersburg front. He presented his plan to Brigadier General Robert B. Potter, commander of the 2d Division of Burnside's IX Corps. Potter approved the initiative and forwarded it to Burnside, who also concurred with it. In the meantime, Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant had become impatient with the siege operations against his stalwart opponent, General Robert E. Lee and, on 3 July 1864, asked Meade if it was possible to conduct a "bold and decisive attack to break through the enemy's center." Meade replied to Grant's request by deferring to Burnside, who favored the assault—if Pleasant's mine supported it. Burnside persuaded Meade to go along with the plan, and Grant approved it. The 48th, a regiment of coal miners, was particularly well suited for the difficult task of preparing the mine, the construction of which was already under way at the time of Grant's request.

Burnside picked Brigadier General Edward Ferrero's 4th Division, comprised totally of black soldiers, to spearhead the assault after the explosion of the mine. Ferrero's troops were fresh, compared to the mostly shell-shocked divisions in IX Corps at the time. Moreover, the black soldiers were anxious to prove their mettle in battle and practiced with enthusiasm in mockups built out of sight of the Confederate positions.

As July came to a close, construction of the mine was completed and the stage was set for it to be ignited. In the meantime, Confederate countermine efforts had failed to pinpoint the location of the suspected Union mine. Burnside's initial assault (to be conducted immediately after the blast) featured Ferrero's Negro Division—already specially trained and motivated—as the main effort, with Brigadier Generals Robert B. Potter and Orlando B. Wilcox in support. Brigadier General James Ledlie's division would serve as the reserve.

At the eleventh hour, Meade persuaded Grant that black troops should not lead the charge. Meade based his objections primarily on political, not military factors.

He pointed out that Ferrero's division was untried in combat and that failure in its attack could result in a slaughter, with disastrous political repercussions. The Northern press was already especially sensitive to the high casualty rates that black troops had incurred in the bloody conflict. Persuaded by Meade's recommendation, Grant agreed to modify the plan.

Burnside now allowed the assignment to be determined by lot. Ledlie, later described by Grant as the "worst division commander in IX Corps!" drew the mission. Thus, the charge would now be led by untrained troops, weary and shell-shocked from continuous fighting in the trenches of Petersburg, rather than by an inspired, freshly trained black division.

Burnside's revised plan centered on Ledlie dashing through the blast area and seizing Cemetery Hill, near the Blandford Church. Wilcox's division would follow Ledlie around the abandoned entrenchments and swing into line on his left flank. Meanwhile, Potter's division would hold the right salient. Ferrero's division was relegated to the reserve force. Burnside assumed that the Confederates would be so confused by the effects of the huge blast that Union forces, moving by division, could exploit their demoralized state by launching a lightning strike through the pit. Darkness would provide cover and concealment for the Union forces.

At 0330 on Saturday 30 July, the mine was set to explode. It was testimony to the dedication and determination of the coal miners of the 48th that it had been built at all. It was difficult for any commander to envision an end state: a mine of this size had never been detonated before. Lieutenant Jacob Douty and Sergeant Henry Rees of the 48th were charged with setting off the explosion. Due to dampness and poor splicing, the mine did not go off as scheduled. The two brave men, nonetheless, relit the mine, and at 0444, it finally blew up!

The effect of the explosion on the battlefield was like that of an atomic bomb. Both sides were awestruck, and for nearly fifteen minutes, few shots were fired. The pause caused by the shock of the explosion was seized upon by the Confederates who, in the midst of the confusion, were hastily able to reinforce their thin line of defense along the trenches and direct deadly fire on the flanks of the men prepared to rush into the crater. In reaction, the Union brigades in the crater became commingled as they huddled for protection. Southern sharpshooters and artillery enjoyed easy targets against the clustered mob of dazed and frightened Federal troops.

Historians have credited Brigadier General William Mahone with seizing the initiative for the South. He had been faced with three courses of action: to retreat, hold in position, or direct a counterattack. Quickly assessing the tactical situation, Mahone, cool under pressure, had skillfully assembled his stunned troops to launch a counteroffensive against the massed Union forces in the pit. As Union forces advanced on the Southerners' left flank, Mahone ordered a countercharge, repelling the attackers through a synchronized use of artillery and infantry.

Mahone had correctly recognized his situation, understood it, and established a vision of a desired end state. Thus, he reinforced his weak position and sought the initiative despite the odds against him. He articulated his unifying concept of operation, invoked his will to move his battered, but not broken, Confederate force, and led a successful countercharge. Asserting effective senior leadership, he had transformed a potentially disastrous situation into a position of strength by building a defense in depth and directing withering fire on his battle-weary opponents.

As the attack continued, Union divisions continued to get bogged down in the crater. While they were able to get into the crater, they found it extremely difficult to get out of the huge hole. Where were Generals Ledlie and Ferrero during the assault? They were quenching their palate with rum as they crouched in a protected hospital bunker well behind the main lines. From this location, they relied on dispatchers to bring them information on activities at the front. Lacking inspired senior-level leadership, Union troop discipline began to erode as daylight approached. The Federals had been unsuccessful in exploiting the cover of darkness and the initial shock of the blast to overwhelm their opponent. Burnside had failed to concentrate decisive combat power at the required time and place and to protect his force adequately.

As the morning wore on, Union troops were awash in their own perspiration and blood. They thirsted for water and yearned for relief from what they must have considered a suicide mission. Despite his apparent initial failure, Burnside still wanted to press the attack, perceiving a weakness on the Confederate right flank. If the Federals could break through the Confederate works, a clear path to Richmond lay beyond the horrors of the pit and perhaps a quick end to the war. Meade, however, felt compelled to withdraw, heavily influenced by the massive casualties suffered by the unfortunate soldiers mired in the crater. He ordered Burnside to end the assault. Burnside, exasperated at the order, attempted to ignore it and confronted Meade in an insubordinate manner. Nevertheless, the order stood and, at 0900, the battle of the Crater was over.

After the battle, the Union efforts focused more on finding a scapegoat instead of trying to determine what went wrong and how it should have been fixed. Burnside was court-martialed for insubordination by Meade but was later vindicated by a Joint Congressional Committee that blamed Meade for not pressing the attack. A court of inquiry later determined that Ledlie was guilty of dereliction of duty, and he resigned his commission on 23 January 1865. Ferrero, through an administrative oversight, was raised to a brevet major general for his performance during the Petersburg campaign! Meanwhile, Lee's army survived to fight another day, and siege warfare dragged on along the Petersburg front.

What lessons can be learned by examining the Battle of the Crater? First, senior-level leaders must be able to envision the aftereffects on a battlefield when employing weapons of mass destruction. Union commanders failed to visualize

what would happen after the mine exploded. They did not think past the creation of the breach to the real objective of the attack—the penetration of the Petersburg defenses. Second, the substitution of ill-trained and poorly led troops for prepared, motivated soldiers to satisfy political considerations was a prescription for disaster. Both of these lessons are instructive to our modern Army.

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XI. Intuitive Vision Versus Practical Realities: Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn

Major William M. Campsey

In attempting to describe the intuitive qualities necessary for commanders to understand the form and implications of their tactical circumstances, military theorists rely in some measure on the metaphor of human eyesight. Carl Clausewitz, in his work *On War*, admitted to the limitations of direct language when he chose the French idiom *coup d'oeil* to illuminate his concept of the intellectual orientation necessary in successful commanders. The metaphor, he said, "refers not alone to the physical but, more commonly, to the inward eye." The strict translation of the words "strike the eye" is illuminating. Meaningless when taken as direct language, this phrase assumes a powerful force when the reader is prepared to accept it metaphorically.

Although this metaphor of "seeing" is powerful, it is also imprecise because it allows the commander the freedom to interpret his vision in whatever way seems appropriate to a particular situation. No serious and credible military thinker, however, believes that intuitively "seeing" or "visualizing" a tactical situation is sufficient basis for a commander to act. Rather, intuition serves as the cognitive foundation upon which facts, near facts, and speculation can coalesce to form judgment. But while intuition can be the commander's most powerful tool, it can also imperil his force. The danger posed by a misguided intuition can be illustrated in a single example: the approach of George Armstrong Custer's force to the Sioux at Little Bighorn.

Custer's cavalry was part of a force that was charged with the mission of driving the Sioux from the vast area of the plains onto the reservation. Although formal doctrine was lacking in the frontier army, years of Indian fighting had established several reasonable generalizations about the Indians as an enemy, and these were part of Custer's intellectual baggage. Several of those generalizations were grounded in the natural realities that drove the Indian way of life: food, water, and sanitation. For instance, commanders in the frontier army understood that the Indians were forced to move to find game, their main food source. Like the animals they were hunting, Indians obviously could not move too far from water. Streams and rivers, therefore, became their natural highways. Sanitation also governed the Indians' behavior. When the herds remained relatively close to one camp, sanitation problems forced the village to displace frequently. Food, water, and sanitation also had a moderating effect on the size of villages. A village only needed to be large enough to have sufficient hunters to bring home food. Any more people would add mouths to feed without adding much to the efficiency of the Indians' food gathering.

Years of this subsistence economy gave rise to strong Indian cultural values. Since the hunt was the primary means of survival, a man that could hunt successfully gained the highest prestige in Indian society. Not surprisingly, individual bravery and prowess became honored not only in hunting but in warfare. A group of Indians would form associations loosely grouped around a charismatic leader. The leader, having earned his reputation on the hunt or in battle, organized groups of warriors-hunters for the hunt or the battlefield. However, after the fight-hunt began, cultural values forced the individual warrior-hunter to prove his bravery. Because the focus was on the warriors' individual accomplishments and prowess, any cooperation was impromptu and between small groups only. A battle-hunt was as much a demonstration of individual prowess as it was an economic or political activity.

These fundamentals of Indian society were central to the U.S. Army's analysis of Indian warfare. Thus, Custer approached the impending battle at the Little Bighorn with a number of professionally derived generalizations about his enemy. The U.S. Army (and Custer) understood, first, that the Indian village was the tribe's economic and political source of strength. If an Indian village was destroyed, the survivors would scatter, most moving toward the relative economic security of the reservation. Second, the Army (and Custer) knew that villages would not stay in one place. Moreover, one could predict the Indians' route of march based on the direction of streams and rivers. But this was of little help when there were many streams and rivers. Third, no village could be overwhelmingly large. Any gathering of over 1,000 people would be unlikely and, in any event, highly temporary. Finally, even though the Indians displayed skills in horsemanship and bravery that any commander would envy, the disjointed warfare practiced by the tribes would force them to yield in the face of the cooperative tactics of the cavalry. This was the "vision" Custer carried onto the high plains. He expected the particular realities of the campaign to refine and sharpen *that* vision. He did not expect the particular realities of the campaign to challenge it.

As Custer gathered his force and departed the company of his superior, General Alfred H. Terry, he knew that he would find a fight before he rejoined Terry. Recent intelligence had established that a large village was moving southward up Rosebud Creek. Terry decided to split his force, sending Custer's Seventh Cavalry up the Rosebud while the balance of Terry's troops moved up a parallel stream just to the west—the Bighorn and its tributary, the Little Bighorn. In this pincer movement, Custer's force, tailored for swift movement and quick strikes, would probe constantly to the west, ensuring that the Indians were not turning to the east but were forced to the west and the Little Bighorn. Custer's cavalry was equipped and manned to deal with all of the reasonable contingencies that he and his contemporaries could imagine.

Following the Rosebud between 22 and 24 June 1876, Custer and his scouts found increasing signs of a very large village. On the evening of 24 June, he

received the report that he and Terry had expected: the Indian village had turned west toward the Little Bighorn. Custer now had to "visualize" his tactical circumstances in order to plan and act. Knowing what he and his contemporaries knew about villages, he was certain that he must maintain contact with their trail; to do otherwise risked losing the village altogether. He could "see" that the village was a large target, one that would soon scatter in order to survive. He could also visualize that the village would not be so large as to overwhelm him. It is difficult to imagine that Custer or his officers believed that the number of warriors mattered, given the differences in the opposing forces' style of warfare. It is easy to imagine that Custer's greatest fear of failure lay in one of two reasonable "visions" of his end state. In one scenario, he would be victorious, destroying the village and all its foodstuffs, with all of the surviving Indians fleeing toward the reservation. In the other possibility, the village was visualized as escaping and scattering to the southwest, making any further attack on the dispersed members of the tribe impractical.

To prevent the second vision from occurring, Custer decided to follow the trail west and position himself to launch a surprise attack on the Indians early on the morning of 26 June. When poor security measures appeared to compromise his force during its approach on the 25th, Custer was compelled to press on and make the attack at once. Throughout the day, the signs of the village became more plentiful; the earth before him had been scoured by thousands of lodge poles, horses, dogs, and people. Custer, using his inner "vision" but not his eyes, "saw" a large target on the verge of scattering. If this happened, his force would be deprived of a decisive blow. Also, in his "vision," Custer could "see" the enemy escaping to the south. Responding to that mental picture, he divided his force for the first time, stripping away essential combat power that he would desperately need later in the day.

The rest of the events of 25 June 1876 are mired in controversy. Historians generally agree, however, that Custer maintained his overconfidence almost until the end. He continued to split forces until his dispersed troops became no match for the overwhelming numbers of warriors he found on the Little Bighorn. Popular history's need for simple explanations leads to the conclusion that it was Custer's arrogance that destroyed his command. There is no doubt that his arrogance led him to "see" the wrong "vision." But if this campaign is to be instructive, we need a more complete explanation for his failure. Any objective analysis must evaluate the tactical decision he made in light of the professional judgments prevailing at the time. Few officers of that era who laid rightful claim to combat prowess would have believed that any collection of Indians would be sufficient to overpower a competently led cavalry formation. But then, few officers and scouts would ever have predicted the size of the village facing Custer. Few officers, also, would have challenged the legitimacy of Custer's hedging against the escape of the entire village and his need for haste to keep it from scattering.

No amount of thorough and reasonable analysis of an enemy can yield infallible generalizations. Too heavy a reliance upon such analyses can blind an officer's way as easily as it can illuminate it. To be sure, the truly professional officer studies and contributes to these analyses. One can even make a career and a worthwhile contribution to military science by immersing oneself in them. But the combat commander in the field is held to a different standard. He must use these analyses as tools. Practical realities, however, do not necessarily conform to these analyses; instead, they may create a picture all their own. While we are enjoined by our mentors to "see" ourselves and our enemies and to "visualize" the end states of battles, we still must understand that a commander's vision is often multifaceted and open to various interpretations. Ultimately, intuition and judgment must be as tempered by reality as they are trained by education.

XII. Custer's Vision

Dr. Jerold E. Brown

In modern warfare, vision is an indispensable ingredient for victory. A successful commander must be able to establish a vision of the as-yet-unseen battlefield and battle he is to fight. The problem is that many unknown and unknowable factors intrude between the present and future. No matter how careful the planning has been, no matter how diligently the intelligence has been gathered and analyzed, the mental picture of the battlefield and future battle will always be imperfect. As confident and certain as the commander may be, his vision cannot guarantee success, but faulty vision can surely lead to failure.

This was the case on 25 June 1876 as Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer prepared to lead the 7th Cavalry against a coalition of Sioux and Cheyenne. In the predawn hours of that dry summer day, Lieutenant Charles Varnum and several Indian scouts peered into the dim morning. They were looking for any sign of the location and size of the hostile village they knew to be in the valley of the Little Bighorn some fifteen miles to the west. Although the Indian scouts assured Varnum that they could indeed see the smoke from the morning cook fires and the pony herd on the far bench, his eyes could not discern this evidence. Not wanting to report information he could not personally verify, Varnum sent a message to Custer requesting that he come to the Crow's Nest and look for himself.

Custer arrived near the summit of this promontory at 0900. By this time, a haze lay over the valley and the morning cook fires in the village had died down. Custer's eyes also could not distinguish any sign of the village. Nevertheless, he began to formulate a plan based on his experience and understanding of how his enemy would behave in combat, on his success in the past against what he perceived to be a similar situation, and on the intelligence he had just gathered regarding the location and size of the Indian village. As he descended from the Crow's Nest, Custer believed he possessed sufficient information to plan a course of action.

Custer's plan was simple. He would hide the regiment in the bowl-like depression at the base of the Crow's Nest until evening. There was certainly enough room here for 700 men and animals. Moreover, the depression was enclosed on three sides, some water was available, and the Crow's Nest itself provided excellent observation of the surrounding terrain for many miles. The regiment could also rest while maintaining its security. The regiment would then make a night march on the enemy village and attack at first light on the morning of the 26th. The plan seemed to guarantee success; a similar plan had worked eight years earlier when Custer attacked a village on the Washita in Oklahoma. Thus, the plan was fully consistent with known facts and the personality of the commander. And it might well have succeeded.

This plan, however, was never implemented. When Custer rejoined his regiment now waiting along the banks of Davis Creek below the Crow's Nest, Tom Custer, the commander's brother, greeted him with news that would cause a radical alteration of the plan. Sergeant William Curtis and a patrol sent back to retrieve a box of rations lost the previous evening had found a group of Cheyenne looting it. Shots from the patrol sent the Sioux scurrying, last seen by Sergeant Curtis moving toward the west—the direction of the village. This piece of information convinced Custer that his presence had been compromised and that he would now have to act quickly before the village dispersed. As it turned out, the looters did not report Custer's presence. Nevertheless, one piece of misinterpreted intelligence set in motion a series of events that would lead to one of the U.S. Army's great disasters on the American frontier.

A new vision of the coming battle now emerged in Custer's mind. The regiment would proceed immediately toward the valley of the Little Bighorn and attack the village that day. He called his officers together and explained his intentions. From this moment on, Custer was focused on only one objective: to destroy the hostile village before the Indians could escape.

At 1145 on the morning of the 25th, the 7th Cavalry moved out of its temporary halt below the Crow's Nest. Company H, under the command of Captain Frederick Benteen, led the regiment. Eleven other companies followed. The pack train, under the command of Captain Thomas McDougall, augmented by Company B and seven men from each of the other companies, brought up the rear. Fifteen minutes later, the regiment crossed the divide between the Davis and Reno Creek drainages.

A quarter mile below the divide, Custer halted the column. At this point he reorganized the regiment into three battalions. Custer sent Captain Benteen with companies D, H, and K to search his far left flank for any sign of the village or other hostiles beyond the ridge of hills that blocked any view into the upper reaches of the Little Bighorn valley. Custer's purpose here was partly to comply with his original orders from General Alfred Terry, but it was also to guard against the possibility that the village might have moved or that there might be a separate village not yet sighted up the Little Bighorn. Benteen was to rejoin the main body when he was certain the flank was secure. Major Marcus A. Reno, Custer's second in command, was to proceed down the left bank of the creek that would later bear his name with companies A, G, and M. He would stay abreast of Custer, who would be on the right bank with companies C, E, F, I, and L. The pack train was to follow twenty minutes later.

This division of the regiment into four battalions did not mean that Custer's vision had changed. On the contrary, it confirms the view that Custer clearly expected to close on the village and attack that afternoon. By putting two battalions abreast, Custer shortened the length of the regiment, allowing all of the companies to make contact together as well as providing better security while moving into

unknown territory. Custer certainly anticipated that Benteen would return to the main body before contact was made with the enemy. If Benteen became engaged with hostile forces, Custer expected to be able to relieve him. Therefore, Custer's vision was still focused on an engagement with the hostile village.

There is no indication that Custer's vision changed during the next several hours. The movement of the two battalions down Reno Creek proceeded at a pace of four miles per hour until the column reached the Lone Tepee site at 1415. Located at the previous camp site of the village, a number of men and Rhee scouts stopped to investigate the contents of the single tepee left standing. It contained the body of a Cheyenne warrior killed the previous week at the Rosebud. At this point, obviously sensing that the enemy village was near, Custer ordered Major Reno to pick up the pace to a trot (about six miles per hour). The intelligence available to Custer remained the same as when he crossed the divide several hours earlier. Captain Benteen had not yet reported his reconnaissance to the south, but neither was there any evidence that Benteen had made contact with the enemy—rifle fire would surely have been heard if Benteen were in a fight. Custer expected to attack the village and destroy the enemy before they had time to react.

The two battalions now moved quickly down Reno Creek. Approximately thirty minutes after leaving the Lone Tepee site, Custer ordered Major Reno to cross the Little Bighorn and attack the village from the south. Custer would take his battalion north, keeping a line of ridges between himself and the village before crossing the river and attacking into the village. Thus, the enemy would be trapped between the two forces; escape would be impossible. Custer's vision remained clear and unchanged.

Major Reno's battalion made contact with the enemy a few minutes after 1500. The plan seemed to be working: Custer's vision seemed correct. This perception was reconfirmed ten minutes later when Custer observed Reno's movement from a hilltop on the east bank of the Little Bighorn (later known as Reno Hill). And fifteen minutes after leaving Reno Hill, Custer again observed the situation below on the west bank of the river (this time from what would later be known as Weir Peak, named after an officer in Reno's battalion). By this time, however, Reno's position had deteriorated.

From this moment on, Custer must have realized that his vision was blurred. For the first time, he could see the extent of the hostile village. It was far larger than he had expected, nearly a thousand lodges stretching over three miles down the valley of the Little Bighorn. Not only were there a great many more enemy warriors than his intelligence had indicated, the Sioux and Cheyenne braves were standing and fighting. This was neither the Army's nor Custer's experience in fighting Indians. Much of Custer's vision had been based upon the expectation that the Indians would not fight, but flee. That was not the case this day.

All of the decisions Custer made on 25 June 1876 until the time he climbed Weir Peak were consistent with his vision of the battle he would fight. If his intelligence had been correct and if the enemy had behaved as expected, history might have written a different chapter that day. But it did not. Custer's vision on this day was faulty.

XIII. Leadership at Plevna, 11—12 September 1877

Dr. Robert F. Baumann

On 11—12 September 1877, Major General Mikhail Dmitrievich Skobelev led an assault against Turkish defenses at Plevna that helped make him a command figure of near mythical proportions in the Russian Army. On the occasion of his legendary assault, Skobelev correctly analyzed the terrain and situation, identified a tactical opportunity, and through an unerring sense of timing, the force of his will achieved a remarkable, if limited, success. Still, Skobelev was not the only commander whose conduct influenced events at Plevna. His exploit occurred within the framework of higher tactical decisions on both sides. Skobelev's senior commanders failed to act resolutely or to focus their combat power to good effect and thereby squandered the opportunity that Skobelev presented them. In turn, the senior Turkish commander kept in view the larger tactical situation, employed his forces at the right time and place, and ultimately won the day.

Discussion of leadership qualities at Plevna necessarily begins with Skobelev. In an age when breechloading rifles had made successful frontal assaults almost impossible, Skobelev demonstrated the power of a gifted leader to influence the tide of battle and inspire his men to overcome the murderous power of defensive fire. Only thirty-four at the time of the battle, Skobelev had proved his mettle in Central Asia, where he revealed the traits that were to make him the most famous Russian field commander of the late nineteenth century. Against the Central Asians, he exhibited remarkable boldness, tempered by a prudent respect for the capabilities of his opponent. Following his exploits at Plevna, even enemy observers spoke of him in reverent tones.

The greatest battle of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877—78, and indeed one of the greatest anywhere in the world in the late nineteenth century, occurred at the village of Plevna, situated at an important crossroads in north central Bulgaria. There, in July 1877, a Turkish force under the command of Osman Pasha, Turkey's most talented field commander, dug in to halt the southern advance of a combined Russian and Rumanian army commanded by Russian Lieutenant General P. D. Zotov. What ensued was a fascinating case in the art of command on both sides.

The Russians and Rumanians brought 84,000 men to the field, thereby enjoying a better than two-to-one superiority over the 34,000 Turks at Plevna. In addition, the allies held a five-to-one advantage in artillery, with 424 guns to 72 for their adversary.[1] However, the disparity of forces was misleading. Under the skillful direction of Osman Pasha, the Turks had worked furiously to fortify Plevna along the most likely approaches from the east and south. The Turks planned to rely on terrain and distance to help secure their rear to the west. In planning his defense against a superior force, Osman Pasha exploited the new tactical calculus brought about by the widespread use of breechloading rifles. Each of the major Turkish

redoubts around Plevna commanded broad, sloping fields of fire. Given such a powerful defensive position and troops whom he judged to be well suited to a stout-hearted defense, Osman resolved to let the allies come to him. Accordingly, two Russian assaults against the Plevna fortifications in July and August collapsed in the face of devastating defensive fire.

Undeterred by grim losses, the allies planned a third assault for 11 September, by which time Rumanian Prince Karol had arrived to assume formal command. Zotov, the allied commander, henceforth served as the prince's chief of staff. Zotov sensed that the most favorable axis of attack lay near the allies' left flank, along the southwestern fortifications of Plevna. However, Zotov lacked the authority to act on this assessment. For a variety of reasons, not the least among them the establishment of Tsar Alexander II's general headquarters in the proximity of the allies' right flank, the allies resolved to make their main attack from the east against the so-called Grivitsa redoubts.[2]

In the end, the high command's fixation with the right flank was to prove extraordinarily futile and costly. This was doubly so in light of the fact that forces on the left flank, ably led by General Skobelev, achieved a remarkable breakthrough that ultimately foundered for lack of support. In fact, it was Skobelev's performance that in some measure redeemed the generally lamentable conduct of command on the Russian side at Plevna.

According to plan, the attempt to storm Plevna on 11 September was to unfold in three simultaneous attacks against the Turkish fortifications. Within this scheme, Skobelev's attack was to play a supporting role. Skobelev's task was to negotiate a distance of about 5,000 meters across three successive slopes, collectively dubbed the "Green Hills," and assault two Turkish redoubts, Kavanlik Tabia and Issa Tabia, defending the heights at the southwestern edge of Plevna. The presence of two significant Turkish fortifications covering the western flank of Skobelev's intended line of approach further complicated the tactical situation.

The allies led off the assault with a four-day artillery preparation focusing most heavily on the southern and eastern approaches. By all accounts, the bombardment had relatively little effect against the Turks' extensive earthen fortifications; it resulted mainly in a two-day delay in launching the assault.[3] On the eleventh, the bombardment resumed. This time, the Russians scheduled several pauses in the artillery fire. The intent, based on Russian experience during the siege of Sevastopol during the Crimean War, was to lure Turkish reserves forward on the assumption that they would anticipate the beginning of a general infantry assault. The Russians would then renew bombardment hoping to catch Turkish infantry in vulnerable advanced positions. Osman Pasha, however, did not fall for this ploy, in large part because he recognized that the line of departure for Russian infantry was so far distant as to obviate any need for the hasty movement of reserves until an attack was actually confirmed. Furthermore, a dense fog hovering over the

battlefield hampered Russian artillery spotters and helped neutralize the effect of the barrage.[4]

In any event, three allied columns formed to storm Plevna at 1500 on the 11th. Unfortunately, as the result of command confusion, the Russian attack in the center began three hours prematurely. Russian troops managed to capture the two forward Turkish trench lines but then faltered under the pressure of massed rifle fire.

Attacks on the right and left flanks took place about as scheduled. The main allied attack on the right suffered from woefully inadequate reconnaissance.[5] A major Turkish redoubt, Bash Tabia, which had not been visible from the point of departure, had gone entirely unnoticed until Russian troops came under direct fire during their approach. Nevertheless, the combined Russian and Rumanian assault from the east yielded the seizure of one of the major Grivitskii redoubts, Kanly Tabia, though at a terrible cost. In fact, this achievement had little tactical significance, for it did nothing to upset the Turkish defensive scheme.

Of all the Russian commanders on 11—12 September, only Skobelev seemed to grasp the opportunities, as well as the dangers, posed by the Plevna terrain. Moreover, only Skobelev demonstrated a critical appreciation of timing and the psychological dynamics of combat. Above all, he stood out from the lot of irresolute Russian generals by virtue of his faith in himself and his men.

By 11 September, Skobelev, through skillful maneuver, had captured a vital forward position from which to assault the Plevna redoubts. First, he forced the Turks to evacuate one of two fortified positions along the flank of his intended route of attack, and he occupied the second major hill, about 2,500 meters in front of the Turkish redoubts. Then, at 1000, Skobelev directed the Vladimir Regiment and 10th Rifle Battalion (four battalions in all) to seize and dig in on the third hill, perhaps a thousand meters from the Turkish lines. Because of the fog over the battlefield and the effects of Turkish fire, forward companies of the Russian battalion on the left flank of the assault advanced well beyond the intended objective to the forward trenches of Issa Tabia. Remarkably, the startled Turkish defenders began to withdraw. However, when the limited strength of the advance became apparent, the Turks charged and the Russians pulled back to the third hill. A full Turkish counterattack against the third hill followed, but the Russian lines held firm thanks to Skobelev's timely commitment of his Suzdal Regiment.[6]

By 1500, the fog had not yet cleared and visibility was limited to several hundred meters. To further complicate matters, heavy rains through the preceding night had reduced the slope in front of the Turkish defenses to a quagmire. To support his assault, Skobelev placed twenty-two guns on the second hill and ten more on a nearby height. He committed four full regiments and four independent rifle battalions to the assault, including eight battalions in the first attacking line. According to habit, the advance began to the accompaniment of music and drums. As Russian units descended the long, vineyard-covered slope of the third hill, they

vanished into a foggy depression, crossed a narrow stream, and began the steep trek uphill through ankle-deep mud to the Turkish redoubts.[7]

The Suzdal Regiment was to take Issa Tabia and the Vladimir Regiment Kanlivek Tabia. Shortly beyond the stream, however, the Russian attack lost momentum. Sensing the urgency of the moment as well as the consequences of a disorganized retreat, Skobelev hurled another regiment and two rifle battalions into the attack. Again the Russians slowly made their way up the slope under a killing hail of Turkish fire. A sudden Turkish counterattack against the right flank of the advancing Russians once more jeopardized the assault. At that moment, Skobelev, as described by his chief of staff, A. N. Kuropatkin, "decided to throw onto the scales of military fortune his lone remaining reserve at his command—himself."[8] Rushing forward, surrounded by his staff and personal guard, Skobelev once more stemmed the Turkish tide, and the weary Russians surged forward with a loud "hurrah."[9]

At work in this instance was not merely Skobelev's feeling for the momentum of combat but also his uncanny presence. Dressed in a white tunic and mounted on a white steed, Skobelev cut a dashing figure. By the force of his presence, not to mention his display of courage by directly entering the fray, the "White General" steadied his troops and led them forward. Once again, when faced with a fresh demonstration of Russian resolve, a Turkish counterattack gave way. Kanlivek Tabia fell to the Russian onslaught at 1645 and Issa Tabia at 1800.

Then came the pivotal moment for the allied command. Having forced their way into the Turkish defenses, Skobelev's troops were badly bled and in desperate need of support. Yet the shock effect of their successful assault engendered momentary panic in the Turkish lines.[10] Lacking reserves at this critical juncture, Skobelev was unable to develop his opportunity further. Instead, the Russians were desperately hanging on to their hard-won position. Short of ammunition and entrenching tools, the troops furiously gouged trenches in the damp earth with their bayonets and braced for the worst. In their urgent attempt to create cover, they piled corpses to form barricades. Meanwhile, Skobelev's request for reinforcements from other sectors of the front met rejection. Though unable to make meaningful gains in other sectors, the allied high command timidly refused to develop its lone tactically significant penetration.

The allies compounded this failure on the following day. Zotov not only refused fresh support to Skobelev but failed to apply heavy pressure on the Turkish defenses in other sectors that might at least have tied up Turkish forces. At the same time, Osman Pasha perceived the seriousness of the threat on his right flank and moved to crush it. On the 12th, the Turks launched repeated assaults to recapture the redoubts. During the second attempt at midday, the Russian lines nearly collapsed. Skobelev rushed once again to the scene on horseback to make himself visible and rally the troops by force of his own example.[11] Finally, on the afternoon of 12

September, the Russians had no alternative but to withdraw before their dwindling ammunition and numbers gave out.

During the action of 11—12 September, Skobelev's left wing suffered 6,500 casualties—over 40 percent of his force. Across the front as a whole, allied losses totaled 16,000 as opposed to an estimated 3,000 for the Turks.[12] Osman Pasha's appreciation of the power of massed rifle fire against frontal offensives had proved well founded. Reluctantly, the allied leaders reached a similar conclusion and decided to besiege Plevna rather than storm it. The siege ended successfully for the Russians but could not erase the stain of earlier failures.

Individual leaders profoundly influenced the outcome at Plevna. With the single exception of Skobelev's command, whose performance reflected the influence of a field commander armed with rare powers of discernment and the resolve to act upon them, the allied leaders acquitted themselves poorly on 11—12 September. Zotov, who was no doubt influenced by the presence of Prince Karol and Alexander II, lacked a unified vision of the battle at Plevna and failed to grasp an opportunity. His counterpart, Osman Pasha, had a unified concept of the battle and concentrated his forces when and where they were most needed.

NOTES

1. N. I. Beliaev, *Russko-turetskaia voina* (Moscow, 1956), 242.
2. Ibid., 241.
3. William V. Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna 1877* (London, 1895), 239—40.
4. Beliaev, 244.
5. Ibid., 245.
6. A. M. Zaionchkovskii, *Nastupatel'nyi boi po opytu deistvii Generala Skobeleva v srazheniiakh pod Lovchei, Plevnoi (27 i 30 avgusta) i Sheinovo* (St. Petersburg, 1893), 34—36.
7. A. N. Kuropatkin, *Deistviia otriadov generala M. D. Skobeleva v 1877—1878 gg.: Lovcha i Plevna*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1885), 461.
8. Zaionchkovskii, 36—38.
9. Sergei Gershel'man, "Nravstvennyi element v rukakh Skobeleva," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 1 (1893): 84.
10. Tal'-At, "Opisanie voennykh deistvii pod Plevnoi," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 7 (1885), as cited in Beliaev, 247.
11. Petr Dukmasov, *Vospominaniia o russko-turetskoi voine 1877—1878 gg. i o M. D. Skobeleve* (St. Petersburg, 1889), 138.
12. Beliaev, 249.

XIV. The Rock of Gallipoli

Dr. George W. Gawrych

> Fortunately for the Turks, the commander of the 19th Division was none other than Mustafa Kemal Bey, the future President of the Republic; and that Man of Destiny was at once to show an outstanding genius for command. As soon as he heard that the enemy was making for Chunuk Bair [Conk Bayiri] he realized that this could be no feint, but was a serious attack in strength.[1]
>
> —From the official British history of the Gallipoli campaign

On 25 April 1915, the Allies launched the Gallipoli campaign with the aim of capturing Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Unfortunately for them, Mustafa Kemal (1881—1938), later known in history as Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, took decisive action at a critical point in the battle that ensured the integrity of the Ottoman defenses. Although lacking any concrete intelligence about the enemy, Kemal quickly grasped its intent and began committing his forces without approval from senior commanders. Then, through his will power and inspirational leadership, Ottoman troops seized the initiative from superior forces and pushed the Allied invasion force back into its bridgehead. For the next nine months, the opposing armies settled down into trench warfare. In January 1916, the Allies finally admitted defeat and withdrew from Gallipoli.

At the outset of the battle for Gallipoli, shortly after 0500 on 25 April 1915, the Ottoman Fifth Army, a force of 100,212 men organized into six infantry divisions and one cavalry brigade, began receiving reports from all its divisions of enemy attacks. In line with his concept of defense for the Straits of the Dardanelles, Liman von Sanders, the German general in command of the Fifth Army, immediately departed headquarters, located in the town of Gallipoli, and moved to the heights of Bulair in the north, where he had expected a major Allied landing. He later wrote, "My first feeling was that our [defensive] arrangements needed no change. That was [a] great satisfaction."[2] Tied to his plan, the German commander spent the entire day and following night personally monitoring events at Bulair, even though the initial naval movements there suggested a mere demonstration, while other sectors reported the heavy fighting.[3]

Unknown to von Sanders, however, British General Sir Ian Hamilton, commander of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force of 75,056 men, was actually conducting a feint at Bulair. For the main effort, two British divisions were landing lead elements at Cape Hellas at the southern tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula. Moreover, prior to this dawn assault, at 0330, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), consisting of two divisions of 30,050 men under the command of Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood, had already begun putting forces ashore at Ari Burnu (Cave of Bees) with the goal of splitting the peninsula

in half at Maidos, a distance of only seven kilometers.[4] A mere Ottoman infantry company from the 27th Infantry Regiment guarded the cove at Ari Burnu.

Around 0510, the sound of naval gunfire woke Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Kemal, commander of the 19th Infantry Division.[5] Shortly afterwards, the 9th Division commander informed Kemal of fighting at Ari Burnu and of the 27th Infantry Regiment's move into that sector. Kemal, at age thirty-four, was already one of the most promising young officers in the Ottoman Army. Fate now placed him in the key sector of the opening phase in the Gallipoli campaign.

Two hours passed without any word, and Kemal grew anxious, sensing grave danger in the air. Yet a major dilemma faced him. The 19th Infantry Division constituted Fifth Army's general reserve, under the dual command of Liman von Sanders and Esat Pasha, commander of the III Corps and responsible for the defense of the Gallipoli Peninsula. Now, despite the distant gunfire, Kemal had no instructions from his bosses. Prewar plans called for Kemal to reinforce the positions at Anatolia, the Gulf of Saros, or Gallipoli—depending on the location of the Allied landings. In line with these three possible missions, the 19th Infantry Division moved to Boghali, from where it could move north or south on land or embark on ships for Anatolia. The division comprised 231 officers and 12,777 men organized in three infantry regiments and one artillery regiment.

After two hours, Kemal followed his instinct and decided to act without gaining approval from his superiors. He grasped that if the Allies were conducting a major landing, they could easily isolate the battle in the south for control of Cape Hellas. At 0730, Kemal wired corps headquarters expressing concern that he had had no reports of the types and number of enemy troops in the Ari Burnu area. He informed Esat Pasha that he was embarking with his cavalry company, the 57th Infantry Regiment (his best unit), and a mountain battery to investigate the situation personally. The chief of staff would remain in charge of the division.

At 0800, Kemal set out for Conk Bayiri (northwest of Ari Burnu within the Sair Bair Ridge). Though lacking tactical intelligence about the enemy, Kemal clearly understood the importance of this crest line for defense of the entire area. As noted in the book *Infantry in Battle*, "If [the enemy's] dispositions are obscure and the situation vague, we can still solve the problem; for by attacking the terrain, we can effectively attack the enemy."[6] Kemal wisely focused his actions on decisive points.

At 1000, while atop Conk Bayiri, Kemal encountered Turkish soldiers in flight who informed him that they had run out of ammunition to stop the advancing enemy. Kemal, resolutely committed to preventing the enemy from slicing the peninsula in half, dismissed their trepidation: "There is no flight from the enemy. There is [only] fighting with the enemy. If you have no ammunition, you have your bayonets." He then ordered the men to lie down in the hope of making the pursuing

Allies believe they faced an ambush. The ruse bought valuable moments, allowing for the fortuitous arrival of advance elements of the 57th Infantry Regiment.

At 1030, Kemal sent a second message to corps headquarters, this time informing the commander that he was engaging the enemy. Coordinating with the 27th Infantry Regiment, Kemal organized the 57th Infantry Regiment to attack with two battalions forward and the third held in reserve. To impress upon his men the criticality of controlling the hilltops at all cost, Kemal issued his famous order: "I am not ordering you to attack. I am ordering you to die. In the time that it takes us to die, other forces and commanders can come and take our place."

This order seems extreme by today's standards, but at the time, Kemal had little choice, and he understood what motivated Turkish troops. He demonstrated this repeatedly during World War I and the Turkish War of Independence (1919—22). Kemal believed in the inner mettle of the Mehmetcik, the equivalent to the American GI Joe, seeing much of it as stemming from the Muslim faith. In an official report filed on 17 May 1915, Kemal expressed this view: "He who can read prepares himself with the Quran for the next world. The illiterates storm with the cry 'God, God.' This noble spirit allows us to win the battle." To a lady friend named Corinne Lutfu, Kemal confided in a letter: "Our soldiers know that their bravery and their comradeship are guided toward two goals: either to return home a *gazi* (Muslim veteran) or to fall a *sehit* (martyr) and go directly to Paradise where God provides the most beautiful women."[7] Throughout his military career, Kemal readily appealed to Islamic or patriotic sentiments whenever commanding his men in desperate situations.

The 57th and 27th Infantry Regiments, composed of Turkish conscripts, accomplished their mission despite being outnumbered 3 to 1 (15,000 to 5,000)! Luckily for the Turks, Allied forces were scattered in the rugged terrain. Combat became confused and bitter, often hand-to-hand, but the Ottoman attacks proved successful, pushing the surprised Allies back toward their bridgehead area. In the process, however, both Turkish regiments suffered heavy casualties. By the end of the day, the 57th was virtually wiped out, and to this day, in honor of the unit's heroism, no Turkish regiment since has been allowed to wear its number.

Toward noon, Kemal learned that he could not count on any additional support from the 9th Division. Allied landings at Cape Hellas threatened the entire southern front, and the divisional commander set out with his last reserve (the 25th Infantry Regiment) to that area, essentially leaving responsibility for Ari Burnu on Kemal's shoulders. At 1230, Kemal, convinced of the desperate situation, wired his own division headquarters, ordering the 77th Infantry Regiment (minus the battalion guarding Suvla Bay to the north) to cover his southern flank and the 72d Infantry Regiment to move closer to the front. He felt the critical nature of the battle warranted making this decision without prior consultation with his superiors.

To impress upon the corps commander the gravity of the situation, however, Kemal decided to meet personally with Esat Pasha. At 1300, the two men talked briefly at Maltepe, just west of Boghali. Now Kemal imposed his will on the corps commander. If the Allies captured the high ground around Ari Burnu, Kemal argued with supreme self-confidence, they would be in an excellent position to cut the peninsula in half. Ottoman defenses hinged on holding the ridge lines and hills around Conk Bayiri. To defeat the Allies, Kemal required the release of his last infantry regiment, the 72d. Convinced by Kemal's assessment, Esat consented to the request and even placed the 27th Infantry Regiment under Kemal's command.

Armed with his commander's first blessing of the day, Kemal hastened back to Conk Bayiri. At 1530, Kemal threw the 77th Infantry Regiment, an Arab unit, into the fray on the left flank of the 27th Regiment. After suffering heavy casualties, many soldiers of the 77th broke and ran, leaving a much exposed Ottoman left flank. Kemal desperately juggled forces from the 72d Regiment to reinforce his southern flank. Fortunately for the Ottomans, nightfall descended upon the area, and troops on both sides welcomed a lull in the fighting.

Kemal spent the night worrying about the next twenty-four hours. With the exception of his divisional artillery, the rest of the division appeared in dire straits. The 57th Regiment, his best unit, was decimated; the 27th had suffered heavy casualties and was exhausted; a good part of the 77th had deserted the battlefield; and the 72d, composed of Arab conscripts, was not a well-trained force. Moreover, III Corps lacked any reserves with which to reinforce his position. Thus, the next day seemed fraught with lethal danger. Kemal later wrote: "I can say that April 26th was the most critical day for me."[8]

Although regarding his situation as extremely grave, Kemal failed to appreciate that his tenacious leadership had shaken the morale of his opponent. That first night, Birdwood feared his ANZAC troops were close to the breaking point. In a brief report that reached Hamilton shortly after midnight on 26 April, the ANZAC commander painted a bleak picture of his troops as "thoroughly demoralised by shrapnel fire to which they have been subjected all day after exhaustion and gallant work in the morning." All the divisional generals and brigadiers apparently had expressed serious reservations about whether these battered men could stand up to another day of artillery barrages. Birdwood, therefore, requested permission to withdraw. Regarding a pullout beyond the realm of possibility, Hamilton ordered him to stay, ending his message with an encouraging postscript: "You have got through the difficult business, now you have only to dig, dig, dig, until you are safe."[9]

Hamilton's order inadvertently strengthened Kemal's precarious position. For the entire day of 26 April, Birdwood focused all his attention on establishing impregnable defensive positions in anticipation of a fresh assault by the Ottomans. Kemal, for his part, gained invaluable time to revive his troops. Thus, 26 April

witnessed mainly sniping and a few local encounters; otherwise the day passed quietly compared to the first twenty hours. Most importantly for Kemal, the Ottomans, by remaining in control of the key terrain overlooking Ari Burnu, had bottled up the ANZAC forces into a small bridgehead.

Throughout the first day of fighting, Liman von Sanders never gave Ari Burnu the attention it deserved but instead remained fixated on dummy landings at Bulair. Finally, on the next day (26 April), the German general moved back to his headquarters at Gallipoli to take command of the fighting on the peninsula; nevertheless, he still kept a watchful eye on Bulair for another twenty-four hours.[10] On 27 April, Kemal received his first major reinforcements: the 33d and 64th Infantry Regiments. The front stabilized and remained secure for the next three months thanks to Kemal's decisive actions of 25 April. As tersely noted by a German commander at Gallipoli, "On the Turkish side the situation was saved by the immediate and independent action of the 19th Division."[11]

For his critical role at Gallipoli, Mustafa Kemal has etched a place for himself in the annals of modern military history. Instinctively understanding the enemy's intent and the grave danger it posed to the entire Ottoman defenses at Gallipoli, he took the initiative and began committing his reserve division without approval of his senior command. Unclear as to the enemy's strength, Kemal moved with confidence and courage, resolutely committed to concentrating his combat power to seize and hold key terrain. Then, when confronted with superior forces, he refused to second-guess his initial decision and instead demanded supreme sacrifice from his men. Knowledge of himself, his troops, and the terrain were all key ingredients in his success. In the end, Kemal proved to be the Rock of Gallipoli that prevented the ANZAC forces from splitting the peninsula in half.

NOTES

1. C. F. Aspinall-Oglander, *History of the Great War: Military Operations, Gallipoli*, vol.1, *Inception of the Campaign to May 1915* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1929), 185.
2. Liman von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1927), 63.
3. Ibid., 65—67.
4. Aspinall-Oglander, 165.
5. The details on Turkish defenses and actions come from Muzaffer Erendil, et al., *Askeri Yonuyle Ataturk* (Ankara: GATA Basimevi, 1981), 28—36; and Remzi Yigitguden, et al., *Birinci Dunya Harbinde Turk Harbi, Vnci Cilt, Canakkale Cephesis, 2nci Kitap* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basimevi, 1978), 91—151. For a more general treatment in the English language, see Lord Kinross, *Ataturk: A Biography of Mustafa Kemal, Father of Modern Turkey* (New York: William Morrow, 1978), 87—97.
6. *Infantry in Battle*, 2d ed. (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal Incorporated, 1939), 78.
7. Both quotes appear in Gottard Jaschke, "Mustafa Kemal, Ein Geborener Soldat," in *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire* (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1981), 108.
8. Yigitguden, 128.
9. Sir Ian Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, vol. I (New York: George H. Doran, 1920), 142—44.
10. Von Sanders, 67.
11. Hans Kannengiesser, *The Campaign in Gallipoli* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1927), 109.

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XV. Originality and Success: Lieutenant General Monash and the Battle of Hamel, July 1918

Lieutenant Colonel Michael J. W. Silverstone, Australian Army

In ninety-three minutes on 4 July 1918, the Australian Corps, under its recently appointed commander, Lieutenant General Sir John Monash, advanced more than 2,000 yards in the vicinity of the villages of Ville and Hamel on the Somme River in France. At a cost of 1,400 casualties, it captured more than 1,600 Germans and 176 machine guns.[1] Combining Mark V tanks from the British Tank Corps and supporting aircraft from the British Flying Corps, the attack employed brigades from a number of Australian divisions and four American rifle companies.

The effective integration of infantry, artillery, tanks, and aircraft characterized this battle as a noteworthy example of a successful joint and combined offensive operation. It represented a dramatic shift from the gridlock battles of minimal gains and massive casualties typical of the earlier years of the war on the Western Front. Monash's intellect, combined with his command style, allowed him to plan and execute complex tactical plans in an innovative manner. Monash's vision of the enemy, his own forces, and the terrain allowed him to plan, prepare, and deploy his corps in a fashion ensuring battlefield success at an acceptable cost. Monash's performance, his command style, and planning method significantly contributed to his capacity for originality and led to his battlefield success. His capacity for effective battle command was based on an intellect developed through a broad, rigorous education.

Planning and Preparation

After the German spring offensive of 1918, the Western Front stabilized and the Allies sought to take the initiative and maintain pressure on the Germans. In support of this policy, brigades from two Australian divisions attacked and captured the village of Morlancourt to the north of the Somme River in mid-June 1918. This attack, however, left a German salient in the Australian line in the vicinity of the village of Hamel, Hamel Wood, and Vaire Wood south of the Somme. Consequently, the German guns near Hamel were "uncomfortably enfilading" the Australian's flank around Morlancourt.[2] At this time, Marshal Foch, Allied supreme commander, requested minor offensives to disrupt the Germans' defensive organization.

In this period, Australian offensive operations were constrained by insufficient troop strength due to a decline in recruiting. Thus, commanders had to balance the need for offensive operations against the effect of casualties on operational readiness. The previous Australian Corps commander, General Birdwood, had resisted proposals for limited offensive operations since he wished to nurture Australian strength for future major offensives. Significant casualties incurred in small opera-

tions could result in the dissolution and amalgamation of the already understrength Australian divisions. Nevertheless, the pressure of the enfilading guns at Hamel in the north, combined with a perceived threat of a German offensive in the south against Villiers-Bretonneux, threatened Amiens and focused interest on an Australian offensive around Hamel.[3]

Given the need to maintain offensive pressure on the Germans while minimizing casualties, a potential solution arrived in the form of the new Mark V tank. In mid-June, both the commander of the Fourth Army, General Henry Rawlinson, and Monash observed demonstrations of this new, more mobile, and effective tank. They concluded that it had the potential to minimize casualties in an attack on Hamel.[4]

On 21 June, Monash submitted a plan to Rawlinson for approval. The plan envisaged employing one or two tank battalions supported by ten battalions of infantry. The assaulting infantry would be relieved immediately after the battle by two other brigades. In this way, and by building the force from three divisions, Monash hoped to avoid heavy casualties in any one division.[5] The plan incorporated the latest tank doctrine.

As a result of the success at Cambrai, contemporary British tank doctrine conceived of using tanks to capture ground, with a large element of infantry and artillery assigned to support them by "overcoming strong-points, 'mopping-up' trenches, and consolidating the position."[6] With the tanks advancing in three lines, however, there would be "no rigid creeping barrage to serve as a screen for the infantry."[7] Due to the tanks vulnerability, an artillery-laid smokescreen at Hamel would conceal them from German artillery observers while aircraft harassed German antitank guns and neutralized their aircraft. As early as practicable after the attack, the tanks would withdraw to the rear.[8]

The prospect of an operation in cooperation with the tanks was greeted with skepticism by Monash's subordinates. The Australian experience with tanks was limited to an earlier operation at Bullecourt in April 1917. During that battle, the tanks had failed to arrive and the Australian 4th Division's infantry sustained heavy casualties while pressing the attack without tank and artillery support.[9] Monash selected Major General MacLagan and his staff from the 4th Division for the attack on Hamel and took action to address the apprehensions prevalent among the Australian troops.

Monash, in association with the British Tank Corps, established a program of demonstrations and familiarization training for the tanks and infantry comprising the attack formations.[10] Additionally, as the planning process continued, Monash advocated a departure from tank doctrine. He planned to use increased amounts of firepower, incorporating artillery, tanks, Lewis guns, and machine guns to reduce the numbers of infantry committed.[11]

As planning for the attack continued, Monash instituted within his new command the practice of detailed conferences. For example, at the final conference for the Battle of Hamel on 30 June, 250 officers attended a four-and-one-half-hour meeting with 133 agenda items.[12] These conferences incorporated an exhaustive discussion of a detailed draft plan that Monash was prepared to alter and adapt. By the end of the conference, he expected all major participants to understand the plan in detail. Once the battle plan was agreed to, no subsequent alterations were allowed. Monash believed that this

> fixity of plan engendered a confidence throughout the whole command which facilitated the work of every commander and staff officer. . . . it obviated the vicious habit of postponing action until the last possible moment lest counter orders should necessitate some alternative action. It was a powerful factor in the gaining of time, usually all too short, for the extensive preparations necessary.[13]

During the conferences before the battle, opposition to the Tank Corps' doctrine emerged among Monash's subordinates. Thus, the draft plan was modified to include a creeping barrage, close behind which the infantry and tanks would advance.[14] This approach required that the Tank Corps accept the risk attached to the vulnerability of their tall vehicles to friendly artillery fire that might fall short. Another aspect of armor-infantry cooperation to emerge from this planning process was Monash's insistence on placing the tanks under the command of local infantry commanders; this ensured tactical unity of command and cooperation.[15] Through the conference process, Monash developed a plan that adapted existing doctrine to suit his operational intent, ameliorated his subordinates' skepticism, and ensured that all major participants were intimately familiar with the plan.

In developing the plan, Monash focused on numerous details, including tactical surprise and operational security. He took stringent care to deceive the enemy. In the days prior to the attack, he established routine artillery fires replicating the coming attack barrage. He also incorporated the use of gas mixed with smoke to condition the enemy to don his gas masks at the first sign of smoke. Gas was omitted from the smoke barrage on the day of the attack; this increased the fighting efficiency of the Australians while hindering that of the Germans, who, encumbered by their masks, were captured in large numbers. In addition, Monash had aircraft flights conceal the sound of the approaching tanks.[16] Surprised by the tanks, many Germans surrendered on sighting them.[17] Finally, Monash ordered two feints and a supporting attack on Ville to deceive the Germans as to the extent and strength of the attack.[18]

The incorporation of the American platoons in the operation also occurred during the planning phase. Units from the American Expeditionary Forces were attached to British units. Ten companies of the U.S. 65th Brigade were "sent to Monash for use in the Hamel attack."[19] Their use would relieve the pressure of casualties on the Australians but was contrary to the policies of the American commander, General John Pershing. On 2 July, Pershing became aware of their

imminent employment at Hamel and withdrew six of the ten U.S. companies from Monash's corps on 3 July. He also threatened to withdraw the remaining four companies.[20]

The Battle of Hamel

As the battle approached, uncertainty spread through Monash's headquarters. Pershing directed the exclusion of all American troops from the attack, and Monash was notified of this just eight hours before H-hour. Under pressure from Rawlinson to conduct the attack without the American troops, Monash informed him that it was too late to comply and that the attack would have to be abandoned if the Americans withdrew. Rawlinson requested guidance from Haig and was directed to retain the Americans in the attack.[21]

At 0310 on 4 July, the attack started with the battlefield obscured by heavy ground mist that impeded observation, hindered movement, but aided surprise. The attack was a complete success. The tanks, moving with the infantry, quickly neutralized resistance, with only three of the sixty tanks becoming disabled. The presence of tanks demoralized many of the enemy.[22] Meanwhile, the tanks protected the infantry, which consolidated its position and dug in. During the consolidation, four tanks were specifically tasked to provide logistic support. These tanks delivered loads that would have required 1,200 men acting as carrying parties. Some junior commanders asserted that this was the outstanding lesson of the battle.[23]

During the consolidation, aircraft continued to support the ground troops, overflying and mapping the new position to aid command and control. By 0600, most of the tanks had left the battlefield, and aircraft began dropping ammunition supplies to the forward troops. Additional aircraft attacked German artillery and infantry forward of the new position.[24]

As a result of tactical surprise and the rapid consolidation of the new position, no concerted German counterattack occurred until dusk on 4 July. Then, incorporating mustard and phosgene gas, the Germans counterattacked with only three rifle companies supported by a heavy artillery barrage. They were initially successful in penetrating the new line. However, an Australian counterattack, including some American volunteers,[25] overwhelmed the enemy, capturing fifty-six men and ten machine guns.[26]

General Pershing, nonetheless, was not enthusiastic over the success at Hamel and the resulting 146 American casualties. He was surprised to learn "that four American companies of the 33rd Division had taken part in the attack."[27] He quickly took action to prevent further circumvention of his intentions.

The Australians received congratulations from a range of higher headquarters. General Elles of the British Tank Corps later asserted that Hamel represented "the

most successfully executed small battle of all arms."[28] Additionally, France's President Clemenceau visited and congratulated the Australians.[29]

Monash as Battle Commander

After the war, Monash's capacity as a military commander was acclaimed by many. Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery identified Monash "as the best general on the Western Front in Europe."[30] In his war memoirs, Lloyd George alluded to Monash as "the only soldier thrown up by the British side, who possessed the necessary qualities for the position of commander-in-chief. . . ."[31] While the purpose of Lloyd George's remarks should be viewed with some skepticism, Monash's emergence to prominence as a corps commander is especially significant given his background. Monash, who was Jewish, was a lieutenant colonel in the Intelligence Corps in the Australian Militia at the start of the war.

The reasons for Monash's emergence lies in his experiences as a civilian. As a prominent civil engineer, he had a reputation for adopting innovative engineering techniques and had extensive experience in planning and supervising complex engineering projects. Additionally, he had a remarkably broad education in the arts, sciences, and the law.[32] These experiences and his well-developed organizational skills contributed to his capacity for critical thinking and innovation.

Hamel represented a small, even undramatic, battle and did not change the course of the war nor prefigure any great innovation. Nevertheless, in this battle, Monash innovatively synchronized the actions of four independent arms. His approach marked a shift from infantry-heavy attacks (apparent even at Cambrai) to the use of firepower to support and supplement the infantry, thus allowing a reduction in the number of infantry exposed in offensive operations. His conduct of this operation became a model for other British offensives.[33] Monash demonstrated what his military biographer describes as a capacity for creative originality.[34] This originality enabled him to solve tactical problems and avoid the overemphasis on will alone as a principal battle factor that had resulted in overwhelming casualties in the past and no meaningful gains. Monash asserted that the Battle of Hamel represented an example of how a "perfected modern battle plan is like nothing so much as a score for an orchestral composition."[35] In asserting this, Monash brought to bear his extensive experience as a civil engineer. He valued detailed planning, immersing himself in the planning process in order to prepare and deploy his corps so that success was assured before H-hour. He accepted responsibility for ensuring that his subordinate commanders understood and were committed to the plan's successful execution. In this, he demonstrated aspects of Taylorism,[36] a theory of "scientific management" prevalent in this period, and an attitude to planning reminiscent of Moltke the Elder.

In applying his method, Monash was well served by the tools at his disposal. By 1918, the Australian Corps was a superb fighting force. It possessed very high

morale and a reputation for competence and aggressive action. Its commanders, at all levels, trained by years of war, were accustomed to exercising initiative. Monash's centralized planning process was complemented by an effective fighting force capable of decentralized execution.

Monash's performance, his command style, and planning method provide an example of how intellect, tempered by an extensive and disciplined education, can contribute to originality and success on the battlefield.

NOTES

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2. C. E. W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914—18*, Vol. 6, *The AIF in France: May 1918—The Armistice* (St. Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1983), 242.
3. Ibid., 243—44.
4. Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, 459; P. A. Pedersen, *Monash as Military Commander* (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1985), 225; and Bean, *The Official History*, 246.
5. Bean, *The Official History*, 251.
6. Ibid., 247.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, 325—28.
10. Sir John Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Coy, 1920), 49—50; and Bean, *The Official History*, 267.
11. R. Prior and T. Wilson, *Command on the Western Front: The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson, 1914—18* (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1922), 297.
12. Pedersen, 230.
13. B. Callinan, *Sir John Monash* (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1981), 13—14.
14. Prior and Wilson, 247; and Pedersen, 227.
15. Pedersen, 229; and Bean, *The Official History*, 269.
16. Bean, *The Official History*, 28.
17. Monash, 56—57.
18. Bean, 318—19.
19. Pedersen, 230.
20. Pedersen, 231; and Monash, 52—55.
21. Monash, 53—54.
22. Monash, 56—57.
23. Bean, *The Official History*, 305.
24. Ibid., 308.
25. Corporal R. H. Powell (Joliet), 131st Infantry, and his section volunteered. Corporal T. A. Pope (Chicago) rushed and seized a machine gun single-handedly. Pope received the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the U.S. Medal of Honor, while Powell received the Military Medal. In Bean, 316—17.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 334.
29. Ibid., 234—35; and Monash, 61—62.
30. Callinan, 18.
31. Callinan, 17.

32. G. Serle, *John Monash: A Biography* (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1982); and Pedersen.

33. Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, 462.

34. Pedersen, 5, 301. J. F. C. Fuller and others have also expressed concern with this notion of creativity and originality. For example, see J. F. C. Fuller, *Generalship: Its Diseases and Their Cure* (Harrisburg, PA: Military Service Publishing Co.), 32.

35. Monash, 56.

36. The term "Taylorism" describes aspects of Frederick Taylor's (1856—1915) principles of scientific management which theorized that improved work practices were achievable through the scientific analysis of organizations.

XVI. Seeing the Battlefield: Brigadier General Norman D. Cota's "Bastard Brigade" at Omaha Beach

Major Stephen C. McGeorge

More senior officers led troops into combat during the opening hours of Operation Overlord, the invasion of Europe in World War II, than at any time since the American Civil War. On Omaha Beach, the assault wave consisted of elements of the U.S. 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions. Both assistant division commanders and the first-wave regimental landing team commanders of the 16th and 116th Infantry Regiments received the Distinguished Service Cross for bravery under fire and exceptional leadership in getting their troops ashore and beyond the beachhead. Leading from the front and under direct enemy fire was the norm on D-Day, but among the senior leaders involved in this action, Brigadier General Norman D. Cota stands out not only for his personal bravery but for his prescient vision of what conditions would be like on the far shore.

Cota, assistant division commander (ADC) of the 29th Infantry Division, landed on fire-swept Omaha Beach at H-hour plus 1 (0730) on D-Day, 6 June 1944. The command and control plan in the assault on Omaha Beach placed the 29th Division's 115th and 116th Infantry Regiments under the command of the 1st Infantry Division for the initial phases of the assault. The 115th and 116th were under the operational control of the commander of the 1st Infantry Division. As landings continued and subsequent waves came ashore, the commander of U.S. V Corps, Major General Leonard T. Gerow, would decide when to order "activation" of the 29th. When that order was given, the 29th would revert to control of their own division commander and begin to function as a distinct subordinate unit of V Corps.

The conditions Cota encountered one hour into the invasion of Europe confirmed his long-standing vision of what Allied forces would encounter in their assault landings on the Continent. In fact, even getting to the beach had been a challenge. Cota's landing craft had survived enemy small-arms fire and several collisions into partially submerged and mined obstacles. Like most of the craft in the assault wave, it had drifted considerably eastward of the planned landing zone. Cota's fellow passengers were the command group of the 116th Infantry Regiment, including the regimental commander, Colonel Charles D. W. Canham. Coming ashore, Cota and Canham were met with the sight of commingled masses of troops from the 1st and 29th Divisions, who huddled in the lee of the sea wall and the rocky shingle at the water's edge. Direct small-arms, mortar, and artillery fire raked the area. It was clear to Cota that the safety of the sea wall and shingle was only illusory. German gunners were dropping increasingly accurate fire among the milling and seemingly leaderless mass of troops.

At this point, it was Cota, Canham, and the other officers who began to create order from confusion by conducting personal reconnaissance and by urging the men inland. Cota personally directed the emplacement of an automatic rifleman and gave him orders to fire up the bluffs commanding the beach at anything that looked like an enemy position. He then supervised the emplacement of bangalore torpedoes to clear the double apron of barbed-wire entanglements that blocked the hard-surfaced road running parallel to the beach.

Then the first man attempting to rush through the resulting gap was cut down by machine gun fire, Cota again led the way, followed by a number of troops inspired by his personal example, which demonstrated that it was, in fact, possible to move forward and survive. Once across the beach road, a series of German trenches offered some covered approaches to the base of the bluffs. Cota continued to lead troops inland to the concrete obstacles erected by the German defenders to block the Vierville exit route off the beach. Here, he organized the engineers tasked with the demolition of these obstacles and personally moved along the beach to locate someone to operate a bulldozer and drive it to the breaching point with a load of TNT.

Linking up with Brigadier General Weyman, the assistant division commander of the 1st Division, Cota reviewed the assaults' progress. Amazingly, it had been only some six hours since he had first landed on the beach. Cota continued to lead from the front for the next several days, organizing arriving troop units and leading them off the beaches and inland. His personal heroism on D-Day and the week that followed earned him a Distinguished Service Cross and the stature of a legend in the annals of Operation Overlord.

Cota was not the only hero on the Omaha beachhead. Other senior leaders exercised battlefield leadership through a combination of personal example and exceptional bravery. They received similar awards for their heroism. But in the words of one battalion commander, it was the efforts of the "real heroes . . . most of whom got killed and few of them decorated because no one was left alive to tell just what they did" that got individual soldiers moving up and off the beaches and inland to defeat the enemy.

The battlefield performance of American troops on Omaha Beach was inspiring, but it is perhaps more fascinating to examine the vision of the cross-Channel attack Cota carried with him into battle—a vision he had developed during the preinvasion planning period and that had been tempered by his experience as a troop leader, planner, trainer, and staff officer. His ability to envision the realities that would befall troops on the beach influenced the way he trained the soldiers of the 29th Division and how he and his staff would operate on D-Day itself. Cota's determination and personal courage clearly made a difference in the early phases of the beach assault. But his ability to bring order out of chaos owed as much, if not more,

to his ability to visualize beforehand the difficulties he faced and to prepare himself and his soldiers to overcome them.

The genesis of Cota's vision of the cross-Channel attack came during his 1943 assignment to Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ), the joint U.S.-British planning staff charged with the development of plans for the invasion of Europe. Cota was the senior American member of the organization and was already considered somewhat of an expert on amphibious assault operations based on his experience in the 1940—41 amphibious training exercises of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division on the American East coast. As chief of staff of the 1st Division, he also had accompanied the division ashore in North Africa in the landings at Arzew in 1942, which gave him practical wartime experience in amphibious assault operations.

Among COHQ's most significant contributions to the coming invasion was the establishment of an assault training center in England in 1943. In May of 1943, the initial conference to plan and devise the organization of such a training center was held. Cota's contribution was a detailed address on the role and organization of infantry in beachhead assault operations. Other staff members gave similar addresses in their particular areas of expertise, but Cota's address was likely the most controversial. Cota insisted that the standard U.S. infantry division should be reorganized and tailored for the mission of beach assault. As salient features of his proposed organization, he suggested that the table of organization and equipment (TOE) division be reduced in size by some 2,000 troops, that fewer organic transport vehicles be landed, and that more organic antiaircraft automatic weapons be added to the division. This would lightened the division overall and reduce the number of landing craft needed while maintaining the division's firepower and enhancing its ability to protect itself against enemy air interdiction. Cota also advocated formation of a "Ranger"-type battalion in each assault regiment.

More controversial was his view that the cross-Channel assault should be conducted under cover of darkness! While earlier amphibious assault operations had been conducted at night, none of them had come close to the sheer size and scope of the cross-Channel attack—nor were the earlier assault operations opposed to the degree planners anticipated in Normandy. Before the initial conference was over, naval and air support fire planners expressed grave doubts in their ability to operate effectively at night. Nonetheless, Cota was convinced any beach assault of the magnitude of the coming operation would be characterized by extreme confusion, and such confusion would be so widespread, even in daylight, that the advantages of surprise and concealment inherent in a night operation would still operate to the Allies' advantage.

Cota spent several weeks in July 1943 visiting Fifth Army during Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily. His observations there reinforced and formed his opinions on what training for the cross-Channel attack should consist of and how

the operations should be conducted. These recommendations were forwarded to Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army (ETOUSA), at the end of July 1943, but virtually none of them was adopted. In fact, the one U.S. division then in training in England that had organized a "provisional" ranger battalion was ordered to disband it, probably based on the Army Ground Forces' strong prejudice against formation of "special purpose" units. However, Cota's contributions to the assault training center at Wollacombe still had been significant. The center would eventually see every one of the Normandy assault-wave regimental landing teams cycle through it for a realistic two-week course on amphibious assault tactics and techniques against obstacles and strongpoints built to resemble those on the Continent.

In September 1943, COHQ planning duties for the upcoming invasion of Europe were being taken over by the Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC). In that shift of responsibilities, Cota was released to fill the newly created position of assistant division commander in the 29th Infantry Division. Cota had a solid reputation as a veteran infantryman and leading staff-planning expert on the conduct of large-scale amphibious landings, both excellent qualifications for senior leadership in a division slated for the D-Day landings in Normandy.

In his position as ADC of the 29th, Cota was noted for his dogged insistence on the combined use of fire and movement as the means for the infantry to achieve battlefield success. Cota personally devised an infantry battalion test based primarily on battalion fire and movement skills. Live-fire exercises, including exposure to "danger close" friendly artillery supporting fire improved troop confidence both in the skill of their supporting gunners and in their ability to follow supporting fires onto the objective. The 29th's division commander, Major General Charles H. Gerhardt, a cavalryman, was similarly convinced that infantry battalions would form the building blocks of the division's success. He, like Cota, insisted on training that focused on proficiency with infantry weapons and cooperation with supporting artillery. Both insisted on aggressive leadership and mastery of basic soldier skills by all officers in the division, including colonels and generals.

As the time for the invasion drew closer, each of the divisions slated for the initial assault participated in multiple large-scale amphibious rehearsals that both supplemented the training conducted at the assault training center and offered a more realistic view of the inherent difficulties in such operations. These rehearsals, known as Exercises Duck (January 1944), Fox (March 1944), and Fabius (May 1944), were conducted in the vicinity of Slapton Sands, chosen for the resemblance of its beaches to those in Normandy. Based on his previous experience at COHQ, it was Cota who was tasked to head negotiations in securing the use of Slapton Sands as a training area. A large part of these negotiations was the public relations effort to convince the local populace of the need to evacuate their homes for as long as such invasion-rehearsal training was necessary.

The rehearsals at Slapton Sands resulted in repeated recommendations that the soldiers' individual loads in assault landings be lightened. This was a point Cota had made early in his tenure at COHQ—and yet another suggestion that would be ignored. Exercises Fox, Duck, and Fabius did give the participants some idea of what large-scale landings would entail and just how confusing they could be—even though the exercises were free of enemy fire, the fear inherent in real battle, and the multitude of other elements of friction and fog that have ever been part of war. In spite of extensive after-action reviews that pointed out the overloading of the individual soldier, the orders for the actual D-Day assault increased the individual loads.

Cota's provisional brigade headquarters—the so called "Bastard Brigade"—was in substance the advance headquarters of the 29th Infantry Division. Its purpose was to ensure continuity of command until all elements of the 29th were ashore and the division's main headquarters activated. The "Bastard Brigade" consisted of representatives of the 29th Division's G2, G3, and G4; a division artillery adviser; a signal officer; a surgeon; and liaison officers from other assault wave units (the 1st Infantry Division, 4th Infantry Division, and 29th Division's main headquarters). The members of the "Bastard Brigade" had operated together on both the Fox and Fabius exercises.

Cota's last meeting with his staff took place on board the USS *Charles Carroll* at 1400 on 5 June as it approached the Normandy coast. Cota's final comments addressed the confusion they would all face on the beach:

> This is different from any of the exercises that you've had so far . . . the little discrepancies that we tried to correct on Slapton Sands are going to be magnified and are going to give way to incidents you might at first view as chaotic. The air and naval bombardment and the artillery support are reassuring. But you're going to find confusion. The landing craft aren't going in on schedule and people are going to be landed in the wrong place. Some won't be landed at all. The enemy will try, and have some success, in preventing our gaining a "lodgement". But we must improvise, carry on, not lose our heads. Nor must we add to the confusion. You all must try to alleviate confusion, but in doing so, be careful not to create more. Ours is not the job of actually commanding, but of assisting. If possible always work through the commander of a group. This is necessary to avoid conflicts—duplications of both orders and efforts.

Members of the "Bastard Brigade" agreed that Cota's words were needed to "round things off," warn them of the practical difficulties they could expect on the beach, and give them some general rules on which to base their actions and decisions in the hours to follow.

As described earlier, Cota landed in the first wave with the headquarters elements of the 116th Infantry Regiment, far eastward of the unit's intended landing area. The remainder of the "Bastard Brigade" disembarked from the *Charles Carroll* at about 0730. Like Cota's arrival on Omaha Beach with the headquarters of the 116th Infantry, the "Bastard Brigade's" trip was imperiled by direct small-

arms fire, mines, and obstacles. They also were delivered to the wrong landing point. In fact, the landing craft carrying the "Bastard Brigade" had been under way for nearly half an hour when the Navy coxswain asked if anyone knew where they were supposed to land. What is more, the coxswain had no compass! With the aid of an Army pocket compass and advice from off-shore patrol craft, the men finally approached beach sector D-Red, their prescribed landing area. No troops were observed on the beach in this area, and enemy fire was so severe that no landing was attempted.

Heading east, the advance headquarters finally landed, as had most of the earlier assault wave elements, far to the east of their assigned beaching areas. Members of the "Bastard Brigade" ranged both east and west along the beach attempting to locate both the 1st Division's headquarters and their boss, Cota. By 1100, both Cota and the 1st Division headquarters had been located. At this time, orders were relayed through the 1st Division for Cota to take command of the just arriving 115th Infantry Regiment, the 29th Division's second-wave assault regiment. Thus, Cota and his "Bastard Brigade" were a de facto brigade headquarters controlling both the 115th and 116th Infantry Regiments long before official activation of any 29th Division headquarters elements. The "Bastard Brigade" established 29th Infantry Division's advanced headquarters in the vicinity of the Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer beach exit, where it remained until the arrival and establishment of the 29th Division's main headquarters. At 2000 on D+1, the advanced headquarters had relocated and reintegrated with the division's main headquarters.

In every particular, the experience of the "Bastard Brigade" had conformed to Cota's predictions. Inaccurate landings had been the rule, enemy action had stymied the attainment of adequate lodgement, and confusion had been rampant.

Order was brought out of that confusion by personal bravery, exemplary leadership, and by Cota's preparation of staff officers for the challenges of chaos and disorder that they met on D-Day. Cota had developed, through personal experience and a long study of the nature of amphibious assault operations, a vision of what the battlefield on Omaha Beach on D-Day would be like. His ability to convey that vision to his battle staff—the "Bastard Brigade"—allowed it to effectively overcome the disorder, confusion, and demoralization that was a palpable presence both offshore and on the beachhead in the critical opening hours of the cross-Channel attack. The "Bastard Brigade" gave Cota the extra eyes, ears, and communications to gain a vision of the beachhead battlefield and coordinate the actions needed to move inland. Cota's personal leadership inspired those around him to take action when they might never have thought themselves capable of it in the face of fear, danger, and determined enemy resistance. Cota's actions on Omaha Beach demonstrate in an exemplary manner the interaction of two critical elements of battle command: visualizing the battlefield and using one's own force of will to move the force forward to accomplish the mission.

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XVII. Harmon and Collins at the Bulge: Committing the 2d Armored Division, 22—28 December 1944

Lieutenant Colonel Donald B. Connelly

The response to adversity is a vital test of character. In the Battle of the Bulge, the U.S. Army passed that test. The German Ardennes offensive was stopped by the courage and tenacity of American soldiers and the resolute and timely decisions of commanders at all echelons. While the stories of Bastogne and St. Vith are celebrated, the blunting of the German spearhead at Celles is less well-known. The performances of Major General J. Lawton Collins and Major General Ernest N. Harmon at Celles demonstrate not only character but provide a model of a fiercely personal and highly aggressive American style of battle command.

Every command decision in battle balances both necessity and opportunity: what *must* be done to deny the enemy his goal and what *can* be done to achieve the friendly aim. In the Ardennes, each major echelon had a differing view of necessity and opportunity and thus approached the fight differently. At the strategic level, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, quickly sensed the scale of the German attack and the necessity to reinforce the sector immediately. The destruction of the German Army was Eisenhower's primary objective and dictated much of his strategy. As the bulge expanded, he sensed a tremendous opportunity to destroy the bulk of the German Army in the open, outside its Rhine River and West Wall defenses.[1] His decisions to reinforce the area and to alter the army command arrangements were designed not just to repel the Germans but to bring the maximum force to bear to destroy the attacking German armies.

General Sir Bernard Law Montgomery, the 21st Army Group commander, viewed the German attack as a distraction. He saw victory primarily in terms of seizing the German industrial centers. To him, it was essential to defeat the German attack as quickly and as economically as possible and then to continue with his planned assault on the Rhine and the Ruhr industrial area.[2] In the Ardennes, he hoped for an opportunity to strike a major blow, but he did not consider such an attack strategically decisive.[3]

At the tactical level, corps and division commanders were, like Eisenhower, fixed on destroying German forces. Thus, they were as aggressive in the defense as they were in the attack. They saw a tenacious defense as a temporary necessity to stem the German tide. They believed that a withdrawal would only delay the inevitable counterattack, and they were looking for opportunities to strike back at the German forces.

Montgomery, a master of the set piece battle, wished to consolidate and secure First Army's defenses, wait for the German offensive to expend itself, and then counterattack to push the Germans back. Montgomery specifically requested VII

Corps' commander, Major General J. Lawton ("Lightning Joe") Collins, for the counterattack mission. Collins was known as one of the most dynamic and aggressive commanders in the U.S. Army. His VII Corps was often given the toughest missions by First Army: Normandy, Cherbourg, Cobra. Meanwhile, as VII Corps assembled, Montgomery would untangle the American defenses and straighten the lines.

Montgomery's willingness to give up ground to shorten and strengthen the Allied defenses, however, did not sit well with most American commanders. The American style of fighting was much more aggressive, with more willingness to mix it up. For example, upon assuming command, Montgomery had resolved to withdraw from St. Vith. But neither Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges, First Army commander, nor Major General Matthew Ridgway, the XVIII Corps commander, were so eager to give up ground. Ridgway was prepared to let St. Vith be surrounded, but Montgomery intervened and ordered a withdrawal on 22 December. Differing command temperaments and visions of battlefield necessity would conflict throughout the campaign.

On 20 December, First Army, at the direction of Montgomery, ordered Collins to assemble a corps north of Marche consisting of the veteran U.S. 2d Armored Division (AD), 84th Infantry Division (ID), and the green 75th ID. As the Germans continued to shift forces west, the 84th ID was committed to the fight to secure the right flank of the 3d AD (XVIII Corps). Montgomery and Hodges agreed that the VII Corps counterattack would commence on 24 December.[4] On 23 December, the same day that the 2d AD arrived, First Army transferred command of the 3d AD to VII Corps. Collins now had two divisions committed to the fight, one division newly arrived, and a fourth division (75th ID) still moving. Montgomery visited Collins and "cautioned him to avoid further trouble and to fall back if necessary."[5] Montgomery estimated that the Germans were capable of one more major blow, and VII Corps was his "strategic reserve."

Later on the morning of 23 December, Major General Ernest N. Harmon, the 2d AD's commander, reported to Collins, his new corps commander and U.S. Military Academy classmate. Harmon's division had just completed a seventy-mile, twenty-two-hour road march from Baesweiler, Germany, to Huy, Belgium.[6] Harmon, like Collins, was known for his aggressiveness and determination. He was also the most experienced armored division commander in the U.S. Army; he had already commanded the 1st AD in North Africa and Italy and would briefly command the 3d AD as well. Collins told Harmon to "lie quiet and hold for a surprise counterattack."[7] By the 23d, German efforts to find an open flank had forced the commitment of the 3d AD and then 84th ID, but Collins still hoped that the 2d AD could be retained for the strong counterattack. Harmon returned to his headquarters at Havelange and anticipated several days for maintenance and rest. This was not to be.

Upon returning to his headquarters, Harmon enjoyed a relaxing lunch with his senior officers. Suddenly, a bandaged lieutenant arrived and reported that his reconnaissance patrol had been attacked by German tanks in the vicinity of Haid. (After the campaign, it was discovered that these tanks were actually from a British unit patrolling east from Dinant.)[8] Harmon assessed the situation quickly and made a decision. If the Germans were at Haid, then they had slipped around Marche and were headed for Ciney. From there, they could move west to the Meuse River or north into the 2d AD's assembly area. He assumed, either way, that the Germans now knew the 2d AD was in the area. Harmon immediately ran outside to a nearby tank company, lifted radio silence, and ordered the unit to secure Ciney and wait for the rest of Combat Command A (CCA). Harmon would later say, "I have always felt that if a situation calls for a toothpick, a baseball bat may serve even better."[9]

Harmon then informed Collins, who concurred with his decision. By the time Harmon called, Collins had reports that the German armor was by-passing Marche and that another German column was advancing on Rochefort, where a battalion (3-335 Infantry) of the 84th ID was positioned. Collins ordered Harmon to advance on to Buissonville to secure the open flank and assist the forces in Rochefort. Thus, CCA was committed to the fight. Harmon later said, "Montgomery's previous orders to remain unobserved and quiet had been superseded by events—war, historically, is odd that way."[10] From Collins' perspective, with half his corps committed and the side-slipping German forces flanking these units, he could not remain "aloof from the defensive battle."[11]

If the Germans were not actually in Haid at noon, by midnight they were. Just outside the village, lead elements of CCA ambushed a German column, killing thirty Germans and capturing thirty more. The task force then halted for the night and resumed the advance at 0630 the next morning. Meanwhile, a group from the 2d Panzer Division with forty tanks passed through Buissonville moving west toward Celles.[12] The next morning, CCB relieved CCA at Ciney, and CCA pushed on and took Buissonville. But earlier, the 3-335 Infantry had been forced to withdraw from Rochefort, so the Germans still had a way west.

By the morning of 24 December, the lead elements of the 2d Panzer Division had reached Celles. There they paused, not because of any opposition but due to their extended formations and increasing fuel problems. The depth of the Germans' penetration and the stiff American opposition at key road junctions compounded the problems of the already tenuous German supply lines. Meanwhile, Harmon and his staff were piecing together the German situation. An especially valuable source of intelligence was recon by telephone. The Belgian phone system was still in operation, and the Americans were receiving valuable information on the German movements from brave Belgian police and telephone operators.[13]

At 1430 on 24 December, Harmon called VII Corps and spoke to Brigadier General Willie Palmer, VII Corps' artillery commander. Harmon said excitedly,

"One of my patrols just reported Kraut tanks coiled up near Celles. Belgians say the Krauts are out of gas. They're sitting ducks. Let me take the bastards."[14] Aware of Montgomery's orders, Palmer told Harmon he must wait for Collins to return to headquarters for a final decision. Twenty minutes later, Palmer received a phone call from Major General Kean, Hodges' chief of staff. Concerned about operational security, Kean told Palmer the new line would be from town "A" to town "H." At first, Palmer thought that this meant Harmon could attack. Later, fearing a misunderstanding, Kean called back and said, "Roll with the punch." Palmer then realized that "A-H" meant Andenne-Hotten, and he was being told to pivot back. Collins, who had been informed of the first message, was with Harmon planning an attack for the next day. When informed of the change, Collins told Harmon to continue planning the attack, and Collins returned to his headquarters to await a messenger from First Army.

Colonel "Red" Akers, First Army's assistant G3, arrived at VII Corps late in the evening. He told Collins and his staff that Montgomery was trying to shorten and stabilize the First Army's lines. For the time being, VII Corps was released from all offensive missions and had the use of all forces in the corps. VII Corps was to stabilize the right flank of First Army and was permitted, if Collins thought necessary, to drop back to the line of Andenne-Hotton-Monhay. Thinking back to the German confusion of oral orders in the Battle of the Marne, Collins asked Akers to put the instructions in writing. Since the instructions gave Collins free use of his corps and did not forbid an attack, Collins ordered Harmon to attack Celles in the morning. The VII Corps' after-action report would characterize Collins' decision this way: "General Collins chose to accomplish his mission by resorting to active defense tactics and launched a series of limited objective attacks to prevent a concentration of too much enemy strength at any single point which might break his lines while additional reinforcements were coming up."[15]

Upon receiving permission, Harmon exclaimed, "The bastards are in the bag."[16] On Christmas morning, Harmon's CCB launched its attack toward Celles. By the evening, it had cut off and surrounded the German forces at Celles—major elements of the 2d Panzer Division. Meanwhile, CCA was continuing to move to Rochefort. At Havrenne and Humain, they encountered elements of the Panzer *Lehr* Division attempting to reinforce the 2d Panzers. During the next few days, the Germans would make numerous attempts to break through to their units in Celles. On 27 December, the remaining Germans abandoned their vehicles and attempted to infiltrate back to the German lines. In these actions, the 2d AD killed over 550 enemy soldiers and captured 1,200. They destroyed eighty-two tanks and nearly 500 vehicles. Their own losses were 43 killed in action, 201 wounded in action, and the loss of twenty-eight tanks (twenty-six later repaired).[17]

Ironically, on the very day of Harmon's attack on Celles, Montgomery told General Omar N. Bradley that he could not pass over to the offensive. He expected one more enemy blow to his flank and said that he would attack after the Germans

exhausted themselves.[18] Again, Harmon reflected, "To me the whole experience was a clear demonstration that the high command, surveying the scene from forty miles away, was too distant to sense the real situation at the front."[19] The German spearhead had been broken.

Harmon and Collins had seized the tactical initiative and displayed great personal involvement and responsibility. Just as Harmon took the responsibility to advance CCA to Ciney and precipitated the fight at Buissonville, Collins assumed responsibility for the decision to attack at Celles. The attacks of the 2d AD wrecked the 2d Panzer Division and halted the Germans' westward advance. However, Nigel Hamilton, Montgomery's biographer, suggests that Collins' "disobedience" preempted a full-blow counterattack and thus a more decisive operational victory. He says that Montgomery's plan was to stretch out the Germans and, if necessary, lure them northward between Namur and Huy, where they could be trapped between British XXX Corps and VII Corps.[20]

Was Montgomery out of touch, or was his vision of a major counterattack undermined by the piecemeal attacks of subordinates? Part of the answer to this is the commanders' different visions of the battlefield. At the tactical level, the American commanders looked at the map and saw open flanks and critical road junctions and bridges that shaped the battlefield. If this key terrain was held, the Germans would be bottled up. If the Germans took these choke points, not only could they continue to advance, but any Allied counterattack would then face the problem of retaking these highly defensible positions. Hence, the tactical commanders would cling tenaciously to these points and, as in the case of the 2d AD, even advance to seize them. At the operational level, Montgomery looked at a map that showed most of his divisions engaged on a long, serpentine, and fragile front. He had few ready reserves and expected the enemy to commit fresh forces. Straightening or "tidying" lines could generate local reserves and conserve strength. By maintaining a strong uncommitted reserve, he could simultaneously prepare for unanticipated problems and prepare for a major counterblow.

National perspectives also shaped the different assessments. The British were approaching the limits of their resources. As Major General Francis de Guingand, Montgomery's chief of staff, says, "There were no new divisions arriving as was the case with the Americans."[21] Montgomery was also surprised by the infantry shortage in many U.S. divisions during the winter of 1944. This reinforced Montgomery's natural caution. The Americans, however, approached operations from a position of increasing strength. The American attitude was much more pugnacious; talk of withdrawal was often viewed as defeatism. To the American leaders, the Bulge was a temporary setback, and the rapid marshaling of American power would reverse the situation.

The question remains: was it a missed opportunity for a major operational victory? Did Harmon and Collins sacrifice an operationally decisive counterattack

for tactical advantage? In sum, I think not. Montgomery's vision of VII Corps' role was far more contingent than Hamilton implies. Montgomery's plan attempted to balance the possibility of disaster and opportunity. Hodges and Collins had originally wanted to place VII Corps farther east and attack through St. Vith toward Houffalize.[22] Montgomery rejected this plan as too risky and placed them near Marche. Montgomery's rejection of the bolder attack was probably prudent, but he also had another concern. If the attack failed or the Germans continued to shift west, he would be forced to commit the British XXX Corps. But de Guingand later pointed out that "a fresh 30th Corps was vital" to future British operations.[23] Montgomery hoped he would have an opportunity to launch a concentrated VII Corps. Yet by placing VII Corps near Marche, they were also in a position to guard First Army's right flank and avoid the commitment of the XXX Corps (along the Meuse) to the defensive battle. Both Hodges and Collins had expressed the concern that this placement risked commitment to the battle.[24] If Montgomery had truly intended that VII Corps remain unengaged, he would have positioned them farther to the rear, near Huy.

Montgomery also had another reason for restraining VII Corps. Intelligence reports showed that the Germans still had several panzer divisions in reserve.[25] Montgomery's method of battle was to husband his reserves while forcing the enemy to expend theirs. His expectation of continued, reinforced attacks against his fragile defenses was not unrealistic. However, such fresh German attacks did not occur. There were several reasons for this. First, Allied air power was beginning to affect German operational mobility. Second, although denigrated by Montgomery, the defense of Bastogne and Patton's counterattack began siphoning off German reserves. Finally, the stubborn American defenses entangled and delayed many of the reinforcing units along the way. On the evening of 24 December, Lieutenant General Luettwitz, the corps commander in the nose of the penetration, recommended to General von Manteuffel, commander of the Fifth Panzer Army, that his forward columns be withdrawn until reinforcements could arrive.[26] When Harmon's CCB attacked Celles, the Germans had recognized they had reached a culminating point, and they were beginning to consolidate their gains. The order to Collins to withdraw, if forced, was not necessary. A delay in the commitment of the 2d AD would have been far more beneficial to the Germans than the Allies.

Collins and Harmon had been ordered south to prepare a major counterattack, but enemy action necessitated changes in the plan. Rapidly, each general found himself drawn into the defensive fight. Finally, after receiving orders authorizing withdrawal, they moved to the attack. Was Collins' and Harmon's vision of the battlefield truer than Montgomery's? How badly in conflict were the visions of the battlefield by the operational and tactical commanders? In the end, not very much. Montgomery had positioned two of the most aggressive American commanders in harm's way. The actions of the VII Corps from 21—28 December were not all that

Montgomery hoped for, but they were good enough. The German advance was halted, and the initiative passed back to the Allies. Sometimes, a commander knows his vision of the battlefield will be fuzzy, so he must trust that his subordinate commanders will see and act for him. Necessity and opportunity cannot be deferred.

NOTES

1. Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaigns of France and Germany 1944—45* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 458, 496—497. In modern doctrine, Eisenhower would be viewed as an operational-level commander. However, in the context of the day, he was viewed as a strategic coalition leader. The British tried to reinforce this view by attempting to isolate Eisenhower from day-to-day operational decisions. These different views over the role of the supreme commander were at the heart of bitter and distracting debates over the need for a single land force commander.
2. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, 443. Also see David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower at War 1943—45* (New York: Random House, 1986), 592—96. Francis de Guingand, *Operation Victory* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947), 433.
3. Montgomery also felt the German attack provided another opportunity to criticize Eisenhower's strategy and an opportunity to reopen the issue of a single land commander, especially one north of the Ardennes. See Hamilton, Bradley, and Eisenhower.
4. Hugh M. Cole, *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Government Printing Office, 1965), 434.
5. John Toland, *Battle: The Story of the Bulge* (New York: Random House, 1959), 27.
6. 2d Armored Division After-Action Report (AAR), 1 December—31 December 1944.
7. Ernest N. Harmon, *Combat Commander: Autobiography of a Soldier* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 233.
8. Charles B. McDonald, *The Battle of the Bulge* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1984), 567. Also see J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe, an Autobiography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 285.
9. Harmon, *Combat Commander*, 234.
10. Harmon, *Combat Commander*, 234.
11. Collins, *Lightning Joe: An Autobiography*, 285.
12. MacDonald, *The Battle of the Bulge*, 576.
13. Donald E. Houston, *Hell on Wheels: The 2d Armored Division* (Navato, CA: Presidio Press, 1977), 339.
14. Toland, *Battle: The Story of the Bulge*, 242.
15. *VII Corps Report*, "Eifel 22—31 December 1944," 8.
16. Houston, *Hell on Wheels*, 342.
17. 2d AD AAR, 1 December 1944—31 December 1944, 1, and MacDonald, *The Battle of the Bulge*, 583.
18. Toland, *Battle: The Story of the Bulge*, 267.
19. Harmon, *Combat Commander*, 237.
20. Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: Final Years of the Field Marshall 1944—1976* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1987), 234—35.
21. de Guingand, *Operation Victory*, 433.
22. Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 366.
23. de Guingand, *Operation Victory*, 433.
24. Hugh M. Cole, *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Government Printing Office, 1965), 431—32.
25. Cole, *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge*, 563, 671—72.
26. Cole, *Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge*, 443.

XVIII. Eichelberger at Buna: A Study in Battle Command

Dr. Thomas M. Huber

The performance of General Robert L. Eichelberger at Buna in northeastern New Guinea in December 1942 offers students of history many invaluable lessons in the enduring challenges of battle command. While it is especially difficult to transform the performance of a unit that is already caught up in combat, Eichelberger's extraordinary leadership at Buna allowed him to achieve precisely this objective.

In the autumn of 1942, U.S. forces were at last attempting to establish forward positions and air bases from which they might be able to dislodge the Japanese from the Southwest Pacific area. General Douglas MacArthur had sent the 32d Infantry Division to Buna to eliminate the Japanese positions there. By the end of November, the division had made little progress, however, so on 29 November, MacArthur summoned Eichelberger, commander of I Corps, and sent him to the Buna area to exercise personal command. MacArthur provided clear instructions:

> Bob, I'm putting you in command at Buna. Relieve Harding [32d Infantry Division commander] . . . I want you to remove all officers who won't fight. Relieve regimental and battalion commanders; if necessary, put sergeants in charge of battalions and corporals in charge of companies . . . Bob, I want you to take Buna, or not come back alive . . . And that goes for your chief of staff, too.[1]

Eichelberger and his staff proceeded to Buna by air, and on 2 December, he inspected the U.S. left flank, on the westward-lying operational front, which was called Urbana Force, while two staff officers, Colonels Martin and Rogers, inspected the U.S. right flank, on the eastward-lying operational front, which was called Warren Force. Both Eichelberger and his officers were disappointed by what they saw. They found troops that were ill from malaria, dengue fever, tropical dysentery, and other ailments. Moreover, the men had scant rations, not enough to maintain their weight, and lacked hot meals, vitamins, and cigarettes. Some had dirty beards, uniforms and boots in tatters, and showed "little discipline or military courtesy."[2]

The troops also suffered from low morale and disorganization. On the Warren front, only a small proportion of the troops in the area were on the firing line. Many troops had gathered in the rear areas, evidently sent there, initially, to recover from illness or injury, but now lost to effective control. Units also had become scrambled, which made control difficult. In addition, troops were fearful of the jungle and afraid to patrol. They had an exaggerated fear of snakes and crocodiles, of which there were actually few. Being afraid to patrol, they did not know where the Japanese positions were. Leadership in the force also suffered. The division commander and his subordinate commanders were too overwhelmed by the chal-

lenges of the situation to lead aggressively. Company-level leaders were also not performing effectively.

In the next few days, Eichelberger moved quickly to address these difficulties. He made sure supply problems were overcome by assigning I Corps supply officer, Colonel George De Graaf, to take over supply for his new force. Within three days, De Graaf had 300,000 pounds of supplies flown from Port Moresby to the Dobodura airstrip and systematically distributed this materiel to units. Troops again had abundant food, vitamins, and other supplies. To overcome the men's fear of the jungle, Eichelberger had each company send out a patrol each night, with reports forwarded to him personally. This allowed troops to develop a knowledge of the Japanese positions. Eichelberger also instructed the troops to prepare hot meals, which they had feared to do lest it attract enemy fire. For two days, Eichelberger stopped the fighting altogether so that units could become unscrambled and effective command and control reestablished.

To restore vigorous leadership, General Eichelberger replaced the 32d Infantry Division's commander, Major General E. F. Harding, with the division's artillery commander, Brigadier General Albert W. Waldron. In addition, he placed I Corps' inspector general, Colonel John E. Grose, in command of Urbana Force and Colonel Clarence A. Martin, I Corps operations officer, in command of Warren Force. These newly placed officers instilled a more disciplined and aggressive attitude into their subordinates.

Eichelberger himself set an example by being frequently near the front—in spite of the discomfort and personal risk. He made a point of wearing his three silver stars at the front, even though it increased the danger of enemy fire. He refused the request of his chief of staff, General Byers, that he remove them. Eichelberger exposed himself to the risks at the front so that his troops would know their commander was present. There were other reasons for General Eichelberger's forward presence, of course. It allowed him a better grasp of the terrain and combat environment, including his own troops' and the enemy's positions. That this forward presence was hazardous there can be no doubt. At one point, Eichelberger's aide, Captain Daniel K. Edwards, was hit by a sniper's exploding cartridge while going forward on a jungle path a little ahead of his commander. General Waldron, commander of the 32d Infantry Division, was also wounded and had to be invalided out, as was his successor, Brigadier General Clovis Byers, I Corps former chief of staff. By the end of December, Eichelberger was the only U.S. flag officer in the area still healthy enough to exercise command.

Besides resupplying and reorganizing the force and supplying fresh leadership—his own and others—Eichelberger had determined the positions of the enemy and of his own troops. Thus, he had an instant appreciation of the strength of the Japanese position. Their back was to the ocean, their logistics source. Their left flank was on the ocean, and their right flank abutted two unfordable streams.

Moreover, most of their position was in a coconut grove laced with built-up log bunkers and connecting trenches. He would eventually refer to the situation at Buna as a "Leavenworth nightmare."[3]

On 5 December 1942, Eichelberger ordered an attack along the whole front. This attack produced a breakthrough to the sea between Buna Village and Buna Mission and generated many U.S. casualties. It produced only limited gains elsewhere on the line. Nonetheless, Eichelberger continued to attack in subsequent weeks, seeing to it that fresh troops were brought in as well as a number of tanks. These resources allowed him to break through to the sea across the strong Japanese positions at Cape Endiadere on 18 December. These attacks, again, were costly in troops, and he lost three of his seven tanks. Through additional resolute assaults, Eichelberger was finally able to suppress organized Japanese resistance by 3 January, leaving only Japanese snipers to be cleared from the jungle.

At the outset, when Eichelberger had arrived in the vicinity of Buna in December, he had set out to grasp the prevailing combat conditions and to determine the appropriate future end state of the engagement. He had communicated his concept of operation to his subordinate commanders and invoked his force of will to mobilize his combat assets to carry out the various elements of the operation. He was able to use his authority as a commander to concentrate decisive combat power at the required time and place. He succeeded in this effort largely because he engaged actively in the process of caring for his force, in providing for their medical, nutritional, clothing, and equipment needs. He also adopted measures that protected the security of his force. Beyond this, he set a personal example of leadership for troops and subordinate commanders by staying close to the front and sharing the men's hardships and dangers. Meanwhile, he rewarded effective officers with increased command responsibilities and removed ineffective commanders.

Despite the exceptional challenges of the combat environment at Buna, Eichelberger succeeded because he thoroughly grasped his own and his enemy's circumstances and articulated a clear concept of how his units were to eliminate the Japanese presence around Buna. He brought the decisive combat power—the additional troops and tanks needed for victory—into the area of operations and exhibited exceptional force of will in inducing his commanders and troops to fight aggressively. Ultimately, General Robert L. Eichelberger at Buna offers a remarkable example of the elements of battle command successfully employed.

NOTES

1. Robert L. Eichelberger, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo* (New York: Viking Press, 1950), 21.
2. Eichelberger, 25.
3. Eichelberger, 24, 41.

XIX. Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping Question a Mission[1]

Dr. Gary J. Bjorge

One who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be endangered in a hundred engagements

One who knows when he can fight and when he cannot fight will be victorious.

There are commands from the ruler which are not accepted. . . .

Sun Tzu

When Sun Tzu discussed the qualities of a good commander 2,500 years ago in *The Art of War*, he emphasized what we now call battle command competencies: seeing the enemy, seeing one's own forces, seeing the terrain, visualizing the battle, and seeing into the future. He also addressed a related issue, namely, if a commander does see all of these things and does understand his situation, what should he do if he receives an order from above that is out of touch with reality? Should he simply follow the order or should he challenge it, point out its faults, and present an alternative?

Sun Tzu's answer was that operations should always be congruent with reality and that orders can be challenged or ignored if they are not appropriate to a given situation. "If the Tao [Way] of Warfare indicates that you will not be victorious," he noted, "even if the ruler instructs you to engage in battle, not fighting is permissible."[2] Likewise, he said that "if the Tao of Warfare [indicates] certain victory, even though the ruler has instructed that combat should be avoided, if you must engage in battle it is permissible."[3] To Sun Tzu, a commander who knew his forces, knew the enemy forces, understood the terrain, and had a clear vision of how the battle would develop was obligated to do what the situation called for—not what someone not as familiar with the situation might order. This was the basis for Sun Tzu's statement that "there are commands from the ruler which are not accepted."[4]

An example of a commander who was very competent in battle command and followed Sun Tzu's principle that orders from above should be questioned if they were unrealistic was the Chinese Communist general, Chen Yi. On 25 October 1948, during the Chinese Civil War, Chen and his political commissar, Deng Xiaoping, questioned an order from the Chinese Communist High Command (Chinese Communist Party's Central Military Commission [CMC]) for just this reason. They also presented an alternative proposal to the CMC that was accepted and eventually led to great success.

This incident occurred at a time when the Nationalist Army was abandoning its positions in northern Henan province and concentrating forces around Xuzhou in northern Jiangsu province. Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping were in command of the main body (a force of four columns [corps] of the Central Plains Field Army

[CPFA]) and had just captured the important rail center of Zhengzhou in northern Henan. Now, their strategic mission was to stop the movement of Nationalist forces from Henan toward Xuzhou. The East China Field Army (ECFA) was preparing to launch an attack on Nationalist forces east of Xuzhou on 8 November (the Huai Hai campaign), and the Communists wanted to keep the number of forces that the Nationalists could use to respond to this offensive as low as possible. But from their position west of the Nationalist forces in Henan, it was hard for the CPFA to stop or even slow their eastward movement. Therefore, on 25 October, the CMC decided that the CPFA should carry out an audacious attack on Bengbu and the Nationalist lines of communication south of the Huai River. Such an operation, the CMC assumed, would force the Nationalists to send a large force south from Xuzhou and would significantly reduce their ability to counter the Huai Hai campaign.

As the following translation of the order sent to Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping at 0300 on 25 October indicates, the CMC had good reasons for ordering such a deep attack. Much could be accomplished. The CMC knew that the CPFA would suffer hardships, but they believed that the benefits to be gained made the operation worthwhile:

> [Chen and Deng's] message of 1200, 24 October has been received. The enemy has already fled Kaifeng. Do not go to Kaifeng or to the area near Shangqui. From your present position take the shortest route to Mengcheng and assemble there. After resting for a few days move directly to capture Bengbu. Also, prepare to cross the Huai River and move south to seize the Bengbu-Pukou Railroad.
>
> Use all four of your army's columns . . . to gain control over the broad area south of the Huai River, north of the Yangtze River, east of the Huai and Southern Railroad, and west of the Grand Canal, and thereby draw the enemy to attack you. When this happens you can use the tactic of rapid concentration and rapid dispersal to maneuver against the enemy. Be prepared to maintain operations in this area for 2—4 months.
>
> This move will be beyond the expectations of the enemy. In order to defend against us crossing the Yangtze the enemy will have to send forces south from around Xuzhou. It is also possible that units from Bai Chongxi's command [the Central China Bandit Suppression Headquarters at Wuhan] will be shifted eastward.
>
> Within two months the ECFA may be able to destroy approximately one-third of the 55 divisions under Liu Zhi's command, that is, about 18 divisions, and achieve a great victory.[5] If the enemy deploys a large number of troops against you, then you can temporarily adopt the dispersed fighting method. You can disperse your entire army (12 divisions) in the area between the Yangtze River, the Huai River, Lake Chao, and the Grand Canal, and thereby avoid his pressure while you wait for the ECFA to move south.
>
> Please consider whether this plan is feasible or not. We can wait until after you arrive in Mengcheng before making a final decision. If at that time you feel that this plan cannot be carried out, then you can attack the Xuzhou-Bengbu Railroad. Or, if Sun Yuanliang's army is vulnerable you can move north and attack him.[6] If Huang Wei moves eastward behind you, you can turn back and attack him.[7] The Mengcheng area

> is good for maneuvering. You can move east, west, south, or north. Before you reach Mengcheng the enemy won't know which way you are going.
>
> We look forward to hearing whether or not you agree with the idea of going to Mengcheng and how long it will take to go from Zhengzhou to Mengcheng.[8]

Clearly, the CMC believed that the CPFA was capable of capturing Bengbu and pushing south of the Huai River. But to Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping, the CMC's concept was overly optimistic and unrealistic. Chen and Deng saw the weaknesses of their force, the strengths of the Nationalists, the difficulties that the terrain of the area would impose on operations, and how all of these factors could affect future battles. Looking at the overall situation, they did not want to accept the CMC's order. Working quickly, they drafted a message that laid out their concerns and presented an alternative. At 1500 on 25 October, they sent the following reply to the CMC:

> We have received your message of 0300.
>
> 1. We propose changing our first assembly point to the area between Yongcheng, Bozhou, and Guoyang. From there it will be easier to either move against the Suxian-Bengbu Railroad or attack Sun Yuanliang.[9] We can reach that area in about ten days (including one day for rest). Tomorrow, the 26th, we will start out and on 4 November we can be there.
>
> 2. We think that seeking the destruction of Sun Yuanliang should be the first move. If Sun can't be attacked easily, then we can attack the Suxian-Bengbu Railroad.
>
> 3. As for pressing forward to the area south of the Huai, this should be done only in the case of extreme necessity. That area is small and there are lakes around it. It is mountainous and lacks grain and water. A large force would have difficulty maneuvering there and conditions for sustaining a force are unfavorable. As of now we still can't provide all of the shoes, socks, cotton-padded trousers, and belts that we need. We have made no financial preparations whatsoever and will be unable to take supplies with us.
>
> 4. If there is a great need to move south of the Huai, then the best approach will be to use one column to destroy the railroad running between Bengbu and Nanjing while the main force captures [a line of cities] . . . south of the Huai in order to protect our supply line to the rear. To sum up, adopting this course of action will make it very difficult for us to fight and will probably increase our casualties.[10]

This message from Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping to the CMC shows that they possessed the attributes that a good battle commander is supposed to have. They understood the condition of the force they commanded, and they cared for and wanted to protect that force. Much of their opposition to pushing south of the Huai River came from their desire not to impose on their soldiers the great hardship that this deep maneuver was sure to bring. But they also opposed this maneuver because it would disperse their combat power and make it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the desired objective. They anticipated a strong Nationalist response and were worried about the ways in which terrain would restrict their ability to maneuver and to avoid battles not of their choosing. They estimated that only one-quarter of their force would be able to attack Nationalist forces along the key

rail line running north from Pukou to Bengbu, Suxian, and Xuzhou, while three-quarters of their force would be tied down protecting their own supply line running back to the west. This was not a recipe for victory. It was a formula for stalemate and the loss of the initiative. Faced with this prospect, they made a counterproposal that the CPFA concentrate in the area bounded by Yongcheng, Bozhou, and Guoyang. This location was closer to their sustainment base and from there, they could either move north to attack the Nationalist 16th Army or move east to attack the Xuzhou-Bengbu Railroad. In either case, their ability to concentrate and deliver effective combat power would be much greater.

At this time, the CMC was located several hundred miles northwest of the fighting front in a mountainous area southwest of Beijing. In deference to the judgment of the field commander, the CMC accepted Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping's assessment of the situation. In the following message sent to Chen and Deng on 26 October, the CMC rescinded its directive that the CPFA move to Mengcheng and prepare to advance south of the Huai River: "We agree with the proposal made in your message of 1500 25 October to assemble in an area between Yongcheng, Bozhou, and Guoyang after a ten day march."[11]

Events were to prove the wisdom of Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping's decision to question the mission given them on 25 October. On 4 November, units of the CPFA main body began arriving in the area between Yongcheng, Bozhou, and Guoyang. By this time, the Nationalists had already redeployed the 16th Army to the area north of Mengcheng, so there was no move to the north by the CPFA to attack it. Instead, the CPFA concentrated its combat power and, at a decisive time and place, struck. After the Nationalists shifted the 16th Army north to Xuzhou to help counter the ECFA's Huai Hai campaign, the CPFA moved east against the Xuzhou-Bengbu Railroad. During the period 14—16 November, CPFA columns captured Suxian and forged a sixty-mile gap between Nationalist lines around Xuzhou and those north of Bengbu. In this way, they isolated the Nationalist 2d, 13th, and 16th Armies and set the stage for their eventual destruction during a later phase of the Huai Hai campaign. If Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping had not questioned the CMC order of 25 October and the CPFA had become bogged down in fighting south of the Huai River—as Chen and Deng feared it would—a victory of this magnitude could not have occurred.

NOTES

1. Chen Yi's primary area of responsibility was Shandong and Jiangsu provinces. He was commander, East China Military Region; political commissar, East China Military Region; commander, East China Field Army; political commissar, East China Field Army; and assistant secretary, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) East China Bureau. But since May 1948, when the CCP Central Committee had decided to strengthen the CCP's military and political work in Henan province, Chen had also been serving as deputy commander, Central Plains Military Region, deputy commander, Central Plains Field Army; and second secretary, CCP Central Plains Bureau. It was because of these latter duties that he was with the main body of the CPFA in the fall of 1948. Deng Xiaoping was first secretary, CCP Central Plains Bureau; political commissar, Central Plains Military Region; and political commissar, Central Plains Field Army.

2. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer, in *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 177.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 171.

5. Liu Zhi was the Nationalist army group commander with headquarters in Xuzhou. He commanded the 2d, 7th, 13th, and 16th Armies and the army-equivalent forces of the 3d, 4th, and 9th Pacification Area Commands.

6. Sun Yuanliang was commander of the Nationalist 16th Army.

7. Huang Wei was commander of the Nationalist 12th Army. At this time, the 12th Army was fighting two columns of the Central Plains Field Army in central Henan. It was under the control of Bai Chongxi's command at Wuhan.

8. Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui (Chinese Communist Party Central Committee's Committee for the Collection of Party Historical Material), ed., *Huai Hai Zhanyi* (The Huai Hai Campaign) (Beijing: Communist Party Historical Material Publishing House, 1988), 90—91. (Hereafter referred to as *HHZ*.)

9. The Suxian-Bengbu Railroad is the rail line between Suxian and Bengbu.

10. *HHZ*, 92.

11. *HHZ*, 93.

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XX. Douglas MacArthur and the Advance to the Yalu, November 1950

Dr. Michael D. Pearlman

General Douglas MacArthur, United Nations (UN) military commander in Korea and United States commander in chief of Far Eastern forces, was not a typical human being nor a typical army officer, flag rank or below. Most of us, at our best, are only pretty good; at our worse, only fairly bad. MacArthur, at his best, was absolutely brilliant. At his worst, he was simply awful. The two sides of MacArthur are exemplified in his visions of battle in his greatest success, the amphibious invasion of Inchon, 15 September 1950, and his greatest defeat, the repulse of UN forces near the Yalu River, 25 November 1950.

On 13 July 1950, a week after North Korean and United States forces first clashed in combat on the ground, the U.S.-United Nations-South Korean alliance was barely holding off the enemy at the Pusan Perimeter, the last major defensive barrier before allied forces were compelled to evacuate the peninsula. MacArthur himself had recently wired Washington that retaining "the southern tip of Korea is becoming increasingly problematical." Nonetheless, he told General J. Lawton Collins, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, that his plan was not merely to hold, let alone drive the North Koreans back behind their southern border at the 38th parallel. In addition, he planned to launch an amphibious invasion behind enemy lines at Inchon, cut the North Koreans' lines of communications running through Seoul, utterly destroy their armed forces, and unite all Korea under a non-Communist government.[1]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) were astonished at the scope of MacArthur's ambition at a time when the battlefield looked very bleak. However, they focused their collective skepticism on Inchon, the prospective location of the future landing. It was, according to General Omar N. Bradley, the chairman of the JCS, "probably the worst possible place ever selected for an amphibious landing." Aside from the fact that Inchon lay 180 miles north of the link-up force fighting along the Pusan Perimeter, there was only one narrow, deep-water channel into the harbor. This could easily be blocked, and even if it were not, the high tides needed to bring assault waves ashore occurred just a few times a month and at twelve-hour intervals on those days.[2]

MacArthur, nonetheless, calculated to fight this battle in a manner consistent with Basil Liddell Hart's dictum concerning the indirect approach. "Normal soldiers," according to Liddell Hart, "always prefer the known to the unknown. . . . Great Captains [however] chose to face the most hazardous *conditions* rather than the certainty of meeting his [*sic*] opponents in a position of their own choosing." On 22 August 1950, MacArthur told skeptics from the JCS that "the very arguments you have made as to the impracticabilities [of Inchon] will tend to ensure for me

the element of surprise. . . . I seem to have more confidence in the [U.S.] Navy than the Navy has in itself." The next day, the chief of naval operations said to a staff officer, "I wish I could share that man's optimism."[3]

Overconfident or not, MacArthur was right. "Our intelligence," a North Korean general admitted to a Chinese Communist liaison officer, "told us it was impossible to launch a full-scale amphibious operation at Inchon. . . . All available reinforcements have been sent to the Pusan front." Consequently, in the entire Inchon-Seoul operation, the UN suffered approximately 3,500 casualties, killed 14,000 North Koreans, and captured 7,000 more.[4]

Nevertheless, MacArthur did not complete his self-identified mission of destroying the enemy. Approximately 40,000 North Koreans escaped the linkup of U.S. forces fighting at Inchon-Seoul with those breaking out of the Pusan Perimeter; the 180-mile gap between the X Corps and the Eighth Army was simply too great to seal. Lest these Communist fugitives should reconstitute a new North Korean Army to attack the South at some future date, President Harry S. Truman authorized MacArthur to cross the 38th parallel. Unfortunately, MacArthur's assets would now become his liabilities. His confidence in U.S. capabilities, his audacity in the face of terrain obstacles, and his intuition about the enemy had enabled him to triumph at Inchon. It would now lead him astray near the Yalu River.[5]

On 9 October 1950, U.S. ground forces crossed the 38th parallel to conduct a mopping-up operation of what remained of the North Korean Army. For the next two weeks, Washington primarily worried that the United States had been too triumphant for its own good. Truman said publicly what George C. Marshall, the secretary of defense, said privately to Frank Pace, the secretary of the Army, that Inchon had erased the public's memory of the desperate defense at Pusan and reassured it that the nation need not prepare or sacrifice to contain Communist military expansion in the future. (Pace: "Would you say I was naive if I said that the American people had learned their lesson?" Marshall: "No, Pace. I wouldn't say you were naive. I'd say you were *incredibly* naive.") In Korea itself, however, the U.S. Army worried little at all. On 24 October, MacArthur ordered his subordinate commanders "to drive forward toward the North with all speed and with full utilization of all their force." On 25 October, the 1st Division of the South Korean Army, which guarded the right flank of America's Eighth Army, was smashed by what the Korean division commander called "many, many Chinese." In the next ten days, these troops would inflict over 1,000 casualties on the U.S. Army.[6]

The JCS was uncertain how to react. The crystal-clear policy of the Truman administration was to avoid war with the People's Republic of China (PRC) or the Soviet Union on the peninsula. (General Bradley told the British Chiefs of Staff on 23 October: "We all agree that if the Chinese Communists come into Korea, we get out.") The ten-day engagement, however, was neither a covert action nor a major military commitment; it was an ambiguous situation not covered by policy. Hence

the Joint Chiefs, apprehensive that the situation "might get out of hand and lead to a general war," asked MacArthur for his own assessment of the Chinese attack. He, in turn, rejected any "hasty conclusions" and urged that a final appraisal "await a more complete accumulation of military facts." Consequently, after Chinese soldiers broke contact and withdrew on 6 November, MacArthur told the JCS that he would order a "reconnaissance in force. . . . Only through such an offensive effort can any accurate measure be taken of enemy strength."[7]

The Truman administration debated and then endorsed MacArthur's resumption of the drive north on grounds that, "pending further clarification [of] the military objectives of the Chinese Communists," the operation was needed to disclose PRC intentions and capabilities. Yet by mid-November, the Far East Command had grown confident that it already knew what to expect, perhaps too confident to be content with a mere reconnaissance. MacArthur's military intelligence command admitted that there were some 833,000 Chinese soldiers in Manchuria with the potential to launch a large counteroffensive without notice. In its attempts to fathom the enemy's intentions, U.S. intelligence failed to concentrate on the enemy's objective capabilities. Thus, intelligence became convinced that the PRC would not intervene. They reasoned that if the Chinese wanted to control Korea, they would have sent forces to Pusan in July when a slight enhancement to North Korean combat power might have won the war for the Communist side. As for the Chinese soldiers who surprised UN forces in late October, they were alleged, at first, to be volunteers who merely augmented the North Korean divisions making their final stand at the border. As MacArthur told the American ambassador to Korea on 17 November: "My intelligence reports that [only] 25,000 Chinese have crossed the Yalu, there cannot be more than 30,000—otherwise we would know about it."[8]

Aside from making shaky assumptions about enemy intentions, an uncertain enterprise at best, MacArthur relied on the U.S. Air Force to ensure his prediction, made public on 20 November, that "the war is very definitely coming to an end." Formerly a skeptic about "the future of the airplane as a weapon of war," MacArthur had become, in World War II, a zealous advocate of "the continuous calculated application of air power" in unison with ground forces. Now, in Korea, the Air Force was not tasked to lift the Army to the Yalu, like the Navy had taken it to Inchon in mid-September 1950. Instead, MacArthur ordered it to fly, to "exhaustion if necessary," in order to "destroy every means of communication and every installation, factory, city, and village" Communist forces could possibly use. By late November, although most bridges spanning the Yalu were still standing, U.S. air power had wrecked the large barracks and warehouses near the Yalu River.[9]

When MacArthur met Truman at Wake Island in mid-October, he assured the president that "now that we have bases for our Air Forces in Korea, if the Chinese tried to get down to Pyongyang there would be the greatest slaughter." By November, Pyongyang was in UN hands. Chinese forces north or south of the Yalu, therefore, had far less ground to travel before contacting U.S. units heading north.

Nonetheless, on 9 November, MacArthur still maintained that "my air power . . . can deny reinforcements coming across the Yalu in sufficient strength to prevent the destruction of those forces now arrayed against me in North Korea." The day he began his final offensive, 24 November, he assured the United Nations that "the air forces, in full strength, had completely interdicted the rear areas . . . " and that there was "little sign of hostile military activity" in the allied area of operations.[10]

MacArthur may have been misled by his previous success against the North Koreans at the Pusan Perimeter. The North Koreans had had lines of communication as long as they would ever be and heavy armored divisions that needed 200 tons of supplies daily. The North Koreans, therefore, had presented clear targets to American air power. The Chinese, however, were a light infantry army having far less artillery, few vehicles (they used coolies for logistics), and virtually no armor. This gave them less firepower but far less exposure to enemy surveillance. By late November, 300,000 Chinese soldiers had marched by night into the mountains of northcentral Korea, where they were inaccessible to road-bound U.S. Army reconnaissance and camouflaged from U.S. Air Force observation. They stood undetected on the flanks of the widely separated UN columns now racing, per MacArthur's instructions, through extremely rugged terrain to the Yalu River—to "hit the jackpot," in MacArthur's words. Very few of them would ever get there. The U.S. Army, soon to be hit from the side and behind, was about to conduct the longest retreat in its history.[11]

Summary

Virtually from the moment the North Korean Army crossed the 38th parallel on 25 June 1950, General Douglas MacArthur had a vision of destroying the invader and uniting all Korea under an anti-Communist government. That vision of decisive battle and political liberation enabled him to discount the skepticism of his subordinates and the terrain difficulties at Inchon. Unfortunately, when similar problems arose two months later as he raced his forces towards the Yalu River, his vision of the operation and end state of the war led him, once again, to discount these difficulties. At Inchon he was right; at the Yalu he was wrong. His vision—in the first case his great strength—now, in a new context, had become a liability.

NOTES

1. MacArthur to JCS, 9 July 1950, reproduced in James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Korean War* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979), 1:184; [Gen.] J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 82—83, 85.

2. Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 544, 555.

3. B. H. Liddel Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Signet Books, 1974 [originally published, 1954]; MacArthur and Admiral Forrest Sherman, both quoted in D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970, 1985), 3:469—70.

4. Unidentified North Korean general, quoted in Russell Spurr, *Enter The Dragon: China's Undeclared War Against the U.S. in Korea, 1950—1951* (New York: Henry Holt, 1988), 96; Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1960), 540—41.

5. Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950—1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 319.

6. "Address in San Francisco," 17 October 1950, *Harry S. Truman: Presidential Papers* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 675—76; the exchanges between Frank Pace and George Marshall are reproduced in Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea: The Untold Story of the War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 273; MacArthur's order quoted in Bradley and Blair, *A General's Life*, 578; Major General Sun Yup Paik, quoted in Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 671, 677. Total U.S. casualties have not been located, but see the figures for individual units in Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 383—84, 388.

7. Bradley, quoted in Schnabel and Watson, *History of JCS*, 1:263; memos and message traffic in late October and early November, cited in ibid., 1:288—89, and James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1971), 234—45.

8. JCS position paper, 9 November 1950, quoted in Bradley and Blair, *A General's Life*, 593; J2 estimates and assessments on 3 and 5 November, cited in Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 762; for J2 reports in mid-November, see ibid., 764, and Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 275—77; MacArthur, quoted by former Ambassador John Muccio in Francis H. Heller, *The Korean War: A 25-Year Perspective* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), 29.

9. MacArthur, quoted in *New York Tribune*, 21 November 1950, 10; for MacArthur's comments on air power (1942 and 1943), see James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 2:281—82; MacArthur's order to air crews, n.d., quoted in Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 241; Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 731, 736.

10. MacArthur, quoted in Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 760, 763, 774.

11. Spurr, *Enter the Dragon*, passim; MacArthur (ca. 21 November 1950) and CCF forces described in Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 718—19, 736, 769—70.

XXI. Invoking Force of Will to Move the Force

Dr. Jack J. Gifford

When General Walton Walker died in a traffic accident on 23 December 1950, General Matthew Ridgway replaced him as commander of the U.S. Eighth Army in Korea. At the time Ridgway took command, the Eighth Army was in a defensive position and posture near the 38th parallel after completing a 300-mile retreat following Chinese intervention in the Korean War and Eighth Army's stunning defeat on the Chongchin River in November.

The defeat left the allied forces in serious disarray. One of Eighth Army's four American divisions, the 2d, needed extensive replacements and reorganization following its disastrous withdrawal. Two other divisions, the 25th and 1st Cavalry, were seriously battered. Of the Republic of Korea (ROK) divisions under Eighth Army, only the 1st was in good fighting shape. A British brigade was combat ready, but it, too, had suffered substantial losses in helping cover the retreat. Meanwhile, the X Corps was just completing its withdrawal from Hungnam and would not be available to Ridgway for some time. Like the Eighth Army, X Corps needed time to recover from the casualties it suffered at the Chosin Reservoir and during its withdrawal to the coast.

Douglas MacArthur, Far East commander, reported that, without substantial reinforcements (which he had no prospect of receiving), Eighth Army could not hold its position in Korea. Thus, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) seriously considered a total withdrawal from Korea and explored how the United States would deal with the ROK government if that happened. In the meantime, the JCS asked Far East Command to hold on as long as possible because loss of the Korean peninsula would be a heavy blow to U.S. prestige and would leave the nation with few desirable options in East Asia.

Until such time as X Corps could be reconstituted and moved back into line, the battered Eighth Army under Ridgway's command had to cover a rugged 100-mile-long front that contained an inferior transportation network that restricted both maneuver and resupply. Poor morale presented a further problem. Many military observers felt that the Eighth Army lacked spirit and possessed little stomach for continuing the bruising battle with the Chinese.

Ridgway turned this army around, transforming it into a high-spirited, effective fighting force, able not merely to maintain a foothold in Korea but to drive back the enemy and regain the initiative for UN forces. How did Ridgway achieve success? His first action was to tour the front, meeting personally with all his corps and division leaders. Ridgway was candid, criticizing the spirit of both his commanders and the men of Eighth Army. He was appalled at American infantrymen who did not patrol, who had no knowledge of the terrain in which they fought, and

who failed to know the whereabouts of their enemy. Moreover, this army was road-bound and failed to take the commanding terrain overlooking its positions and supply lines. Ridgway also complained that the army—particularly the commanders and their staffs—kept looking over their shoulders for the best route to the rear and planned only for retreat.

Ridgway was dissatisfied with most of the commanders he inherited and said that a good leader must be ruthless, even to general officers who failed to measure up. On the other hand, a massive Chinese offensive began within five days of his assumption of command, and he did not want to make changes just before a major battle. Another of his concerns was the lack of satisfactory replacements for the men he wished to relieve. Ridgway commented that a good leader never relieved anyone until he had someone better to replace him.

The new commander was very unhappy with the subsequent performance of Eighth Army in its first battle under his leadership. He complained that major commanders did not carry out his orders to fall back in an orderly fashion, to use artillery to inflict the heaviest possible casualties on the Chinese, and to counterattack in force during daylight hours. In particular, he felt his corps commanders lacked aggressiveness and were reluctant to counterattack. In an effort to restore fighting spirit to his army, he loudly and publicly relieved two staff officers for having no plans except further withdrawals.

Ridgway quickly determined to get rid of most of Eighth Army's higher commanders, replacing them with younger and more aggressive men. Yet he felt he must move with care so as not to upset units, MacArthur, and the JCS. He decided that normally the men he relieved would be praised, rewarded if possible, but eased out of Korea. In many cases, Ridgway already had officers in mind for assignment to Korea, most of them old associates from his service with the airborne. Soon, he had made his replacements. Most of the troops in Korea were aware of the poor leadership, and few of the leaders sent home were mourned. Ridgway, however, kept commanders who performed well, often promoting them to new positions.

Part of Ridgway's answer to raising morale and fighting spirit was to use showmanship. Patton, with his pearl-handled revolvers, had employed this method with Third Army in World War II. Ridgway hoped to do something similar in Eighth Army—but different enough that no one would compare him to Patton. Earlier, General Walker had tried to show a Patton-like facade but failed. Ridgway, on his part, displayed his own distinctive persona, wearing a hand grenade and a first aid pouch strapped to his battle harness. Next, he visited the front lines, believing that a commander has to see the action and be seen at the front if he is to have credibility with his troops. He must give the impression that he is sharing, to some degree, the same hardships and hazards as his men. Ridgway believed and voiced the notion that a commander should never ask his troops to do what he himself would not do and his troops knew he would not do.

Ridgway believed a commander should publicly show a personal interest in the well-being of his soldiers. He should do something that attracts notice and displays his concern for the front-line fighters. Finding that one of his units was still short of some winter equipment, Ridgway dramatically ordered that the equipment be delivered within twenty-four hours. In response, the Logistical Command made a massive effort to comply, flying equipment from Pusan to the front lines. Everyone noticed. Ridgway also ordered—and made sure the order was known—that the troops be served hot meals, with any failures to comply to be reported directly to the commanding general.

Another important part of Ridgway's effort to instill fighting spirit in his army was to order units to close up their flanks and tie in with other units. He said he wanted no units cut off and abandoned as had happened previously to the 3d Battalion, 8th Cavalry, at Unsan; Task Force Faith at Chosin Reservoir; and the 2d Division at Kuni-ri. Ridgway felt that it was essential for soldiers to know they would not be left to fend for themselves if cut off. He believed that only if the men believed help would come could they be persuaded to stand and fight rather than pull out before they were cut off.

As he traveled to the headquarters of the major units, Ridgway gave pep talks to commanders and their staffs. These talks contained many of his ideas about proper combat leadership. He told his commanders to get out of the command posts and up to the fighting front. When commanders reported on the terrain, their positions, the enemy positions, and how the battle was going, Ridgway demanded that they base their information on personal knowledge and that it be correct. Furthermore, the commanders should start intensive training in night fighting and marches, make full use of available firepower, and leave nothing on the roads with the trucks because it was too difficult to get supplies and weapons up the hills to where the fighting took place. Commanders should also make personal checks to be sure their men had adequate winter clothing, warming tents, and writing materials. In addition, commanders should find wounded men from their units and make every effort to return them to their old units. (Ridgway believed such men were worth two or three new recruits.) Finally, he ordered his officers to stop wasting equipment; Ridgway wanted no more rifles or other equipment—particularly artillery pieces—to be lost and called for punishment of those who lost government equipment.

Ridgway also tried to shame those who talked of how tough war was in Korea. He said this current army was too tied to "creature comforts" and therefore bound to the roads and prone to luxuriating in the supplies carried by its trucks. He added that those who felt they had to ride in trucks were out of shape and needed to condition themselves. Climbing the hills and ridges of Korea was Ridgway's prescribed method for them to toughen up.

Most observers agree that after the first battle under Ridgway's command, when Eighth Army fell back another seventy miles and lost Seoul in early January 1950, the Eighth Army's (and the JCS's) morale and sense of purpose reached their lowest point. From this point, the Eighth Army had only two choices—show substantially better fighting spirit or get out of Korea. Ridgway began to restore his men's fighting spirit by ordering aggressive (and large-scale) patrols into the areas just lost. Finding the enemy few in number and not aggressive, he increased the number and size of patrols. His army discovered it could drive back the Chinese without suffering overwhelming casualties. Buoyed by the successes of these patrols, Ridgway ordered a general advance along the west coast where the terrain was more open and the U.S. advantage in tanks, artillery, and aircraft had more impact.

In mid-February, the Chinese and North Koreans launched yet another offensive in the central area of Korea, where U.S. tanks could not maneuver as readily and artillery could be trapped on narrow roads in mountainous terrain. In heavy fights at Chipyong-ni and Wonju, the Eighth Army, for the first time, repulsed the Communist attacks. Ridgway quickly followed up with a renewed attack that took Seoul and regained roughly the same positions that the Eighth Army had held when Ridgway first took command.

During this advance, Ridgway also attempted to tell the men of Eighth Army why they were fighting in Korea. He sought to build a fighting spirit in his men based on unit and soldierly pride, something that struck a responsive chord among World War II veterans. In addition, he called on the men to defend western civilization from Communist degradation, saying: "In the final analysis, the issue now joined right here in Korea is whether Communism or individual freedom shall prevail; whether the flight of the fear-driven people we have witnessed here shall be checked, or shall at some future time, however distant, engulf our own loved ones in all its misery and despair."

General Omar N. Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, summed up Ridgway's contribution best: "It is not often in wartime that a single battlefield commander can make a decisive difference. But in Korea Ridgway would prove to be that exception. His brilliant, driving, uncompromising leadership would turn the tide of battle like no other general's in our military history."

XXII. Captain William E. Barber, Commander, Fox Company, 7th Marine Regiment, Toktong Pass, North Korea, 27 November—2 December 1950

Lieutenant Colonel Greg R. Hampton

The real leader displays his quality in his triumphs over adversity, however great it may be.[1]

—George C. Marshall

By November 1950, the ebb and flow of the Korean War's first year had carried the contesting armies into the remote and windswept mountains of North Korea. Here, many men had the chance to lead; some succeeded, many failed. In North Korea, commanders encountered a wide variety of situations that were not in the textbooks. Leaders who possessed strong will, cared for their troops, and envisioned their role in the greater scheme of things frequently saved the day. One of these men was Captain William E. Barber, a United States Marine.

In November 1950, the regiments of the 1st Marine Division marched north into this harsh land, intent upon pursuing the retreating North Korean Army.[2] The narrow, steep-sided mountain road from the port of Hungnam to Yudam-ni was the vital life line for both the Marines and Army units closing in on the Yalu. It had to be secured. The Marines knew this; so did the enemy. One infantry company was charged with securing the main supply route (MSR) somewhere around Toktong Pass. The mission fell on Captain Barber's outfit, Fox Company, 7th Marines.

Captain Barber had been in command of Fox Company for less than a week when he received orders to proceed to Toktong Pass. Barber knew that his newly inherited command was weak in basic marksmanship and combined arms integration, so he spent the first week on the job correcting these deficiencies—much to the chagrin of his men. By the time he received his orders for movement, every man in his company was a better shot, and most of the NCOs and officers had practiced calling for and adjusting artillery, mortars, and air strikes.[3] Barber—who had been awarded the Silver Star in World War II for rescuing two Marines under fire on Iwo Jima—was determined to do things the right way, regardless of conditions or circumstances. But Barber was not too popular with his men that first week.

The shock of the winter weather was still with the Marines. The Arctic conditions that arrived on 10 November continued to worsen daily. By Thanksgiving, the mercury was dropping to twenty below zero at night, and it seemed the winds would never subside. No amount of clothing kept out the bone-chilling cold.[4] Men became dazed and complacent, letting the most basic tasks go unfinished or unattempted. The mind-numbing cold was neutralizing as many men as enemy bullets, and the job of leading the men took on a different outlook.[5]

One task was critical to Barber on 27 November: he had to figure out how and where his company would defend Toktong Pass. Early in the day, Barber and his battalion commander conducted a reconnaissance of the pass, where they selected a small flat-topped rise near the road on the south shoulder of Toktong-San (the highest mountain between Hagaru to the south and Yudam-ni to the north) to establish the company's defense. As the two made their way back down the MSR to Hagaru, they were flagged down by a Marine warrant officer who was heading into the pass. The warrant officer related that only a few of the ever-present North Korean refugees had been seen along the road recently. Even the children had stopped begging candy from the Marines. The wild game in the area were also nervous; deer were springing out of the hills as if they were being chased. The warrant officer's anxiety was contagious.[6]

The Chinese were indeed up in the hills around Toktong Pass. The commander of the Ninth Chinese Army (Chinese People's Volunteers) had decided to launch a major counterattack against the UN forces in the Chosin Reservoir area as part of the greater scheme of attack along the entire front in North Korea. The Ninth Army's plan called for the destruction of the 1st Marine Division's two regiments along a line from Yudam-ni to Sinhung-ni (Toktong Pass) and Hagaru. Once this was accomplished, the Ninth Army would destroy the U.S. Army elements (31st Regimental Combat Team of the 7th Infantry Division) and the remainder of the 1st Marine Division on the eastern side of the reservoir.[7] The Chinese 59th Division was subsequently ordered to cut the MSR between Yudam-ni and Hagaru, thus isolating the Marines and blocking their potential escape route.[8] Obviously, whoever controlled Toktong Pass ruled the road in both directions—north to reinforce, south to retreat.[9]

Barber moved his 240-man reinforced infantry company from Hagaru to its defensive position in the pass, arriving around 1700 on 27 November. The seven-mile truck ride left the men cold and lethargic, but Barber "acted as if he expected to be attacked."[10] He quickly conducted his reconnaissance with the platoon leaders and issued the company order, while the NCOs distributed a double load of ammunition to each soldier. The company's 60-mm and attached 81-mm mortars were registered on the most likely avenues of approach. The regiment's howitzer battery could not be registered that night due to nearby friendly vehicle traffic on the MSR.[11] No warm-up tents were erected because the foxholes came first. Entrenching activity went on through the night as the men hacked and chipped at the frozen ground in an effort to get the best fighting position possible and some protection from the twenty below zero cold.[12] By 2100, Fox Company had settled into its sleeping bags, maintaining 50 percent alert status. At about 2300, a full moon rose, revealing a clear, bright, and miserably cold night.[13]

The Chinese struck at 0230 the next morning. The 59th Division split the Marines in the mountains, cutting the MSR in numerous places between Hagaru and Yudam-ni.[14] Fox Company's position was the cork in the bottle, and the

Chinese were intent on yanking it out. The first assault, made by a battalion-size unit, managed to overwhelm the Marines manning the outposts and forward positions. Fifteen of the thirty-five Marines manning the outposts were killed outright; another nine were wounded within the first fifteen minutes.[15] Showers of grenades and all sorts of small arms crashed down among the Marine positions. In addition, both company mortar positions received a great deal of attention from the Chinese. Within a matter of minutes, the 60-mm section was decimated, leaving a private first class in charge. The 81-mm section was likewise fighting for its life. Savage hand-to-hand fighting raged all along the company's 270-degree northward arc. Finally, Barber managed to rally his Marines. First, he brought his mortars in on the attacking Chinese. Then, he quickly relocated his command post out of danger and, while continuously exposing himself to small arms fire, rallied his troops in several counterattacks that restored the company's perimeter. The Chinese attacks withered with the approaching dawn. Daylight revealed the cost of the night's battle: Fox Company had twenty dead, fifty-four wounded, and three missing; the Chinese left 450 bodies within and in front of the Marine perimeter.[16]

Soon after first light, Barber began to assess his situation. His company was now critically short of ammunition. Grenades and mortar ammunition were almost nonexistent. Barber directed his men to collect weapons and ammunition from the Chinese and Marine dead to supplement their meager supply and requested a supply airdrop. This weapons scrounging quickly produced a mix of American and World War II-vintage Japanese weapons.[17]

Next, Barber requested an air strike on key terrain northwest of Fox Hill where the Chinese had placed snipers to harass the company. As the aircraft arrived, Barber discovered he could not control the air strike because his SCR-300 radio was incompatible with the aircraft radios. Improvising, he established a radio relay with his parent regiment at Hagaru and brought eight Australian P-51s on target. The sniper fire ceased. As the Australians departed, the Marines leapt to their feet and cheered as the planes roared overhead. Barber's attached forward observer then managed to register the regiment's howitzer battery from Hagaru. Meanwhile, patrols were organized to get a better picture of what the company was facing and to predict where the enemy might attack in the coming night. Later in the afternoon, the airdrop arrived bringing ammunition, rations, and medical supplies.[18]

Caring for the wounded was a major problem. Any evacuation by helicopter was hazardous as the Chinese could fire on any slow-moving approaching aircraft with ease. So, the medical corpsmen performed miracles with only morphine and field dressings. Working day and night, they tended the wounded at the center of the position, warming morphine Syrettes in their mouths. They also kept men from freezing and provided all-important moral support to their patients.[19] Barber constantly reassured the wounded that no one would be left behind.

As night approached, the Marines dug in deeper, knowing full well the Chinese would return to finish what they had started. The Chinese dead were piled up as sandbags in front of the perimeter.[20] Around 0215, the Chinese began round two of this Korean version of "King of the Hill." Preceded by a brief mortar barrage, the Chinese rushed forward. The Marines were ready for them, dropping over a hundred of the enemy with small arms fire alone, but still the Chinese broke through the line. In response, Barber zeroed in his mortars and long-range artillery with deadly effect. He then rushed forward with a reserve squad, rallied his Marines, and killed or ejected the forty or so enemy that had penetrated the company's perimeter. Meanwhile, Barber's men started blowing captured Chinese whistles and bugles to further confuse the enemy. At the same time, the center platoon was being pressed hard, and Barber went there to stabilize the line. As he was moving forward, he was wounded in the groin. Plugging the wound with a handkerchief, he continued hobbling about, often on hands and knees, encouraging his men to keep the Chinese at bay.[21]

Fox Company had held for a second night. Over two hundred Chinese had died trying to force the Marines from the hill, now known to all in the 1st Marine Division as Fox Hill. But Barber now had five more dead and another twenty-nine wounded to care for.[22] The two forward regiments of the 1st Marine Division were also in trouble, and the Chinese were attacking the 5th and 7th Infantry Regiments around Yudam-ni and the division headquarters at Hagaru. The situation was critical, and the only way out was to attack—attack south along the MSR to reunite the division at Hagaru. Further, Barber's company had to be rescued. The final horror was yet to come.[23]

The withdrawal plan hinged on one critical factor: could Fox Company hold out in Toktong Pass? At around 0900 on 29 November, Barber was contacted by radio and was initially instructed to fight his way back to Hagaru. Barber recalled the conversation:

> Well, hell, you're conditioned to obeying orders, so I started looking around trying to figure out how I was going to do this. I had a lot of wounded. They certainly couldn't walk out and I didn't have any way of getting them out. So I thought, "Well, hell, we're here . . . if we're ever going to get our forces together in either direction, we're probably going to have to fight for this damned hill sometime. It's probably better to hold on to it while we got it." I told them we could stay here and that we can do a good job.[24]

Barber's battalion commander quickly radioed back: "Well, hell, if you can hold out and we get you some airdrops, by all means we'll stay."[25]

This decision determined the fate of more than 10,000 Marines trapped on the west side of the Chosin Reservoir.[26] As a result, the Marines decided to move overland to Fox Hill, link up with Barber's men, clear the dominating terrain astride the MSR, and then move to Hagaru. From there, they would push south to the port of Hungnam for evacuation.

The remainder of that day saw a repeat of the previous daylight activities. As if on cue, Marine Corsairs arrived overhead at 0700. This time, Barber had no difficulty controlling the air strikes, as the Marine pilots had compatible radios. As Barber's men cheered, the Corsair pilots pasted known and suspected troop concentrations. In addition, two airdrops rained down ammunition, food, medical supplies, and much-needed blankets for the wounded. The Marines found a number of uses for the accompanying colorful parachutes, employing them as improvised winter camouflage smocks, perimeter markers and, at Barber's direction, insulators for the wounded. Patrols were again sent out to eliminate snipers and obtain information on enemy dispositions.[27]

Later that evening, Barber gathered his platoon leaders and confided with them. He told them that relief was planned, but when it would happen was anybody's guess. He described the situation facing both the 5th and 7th Regiments at Yudam-ni and the division main body at Hagaru. "They're completely surrounded," he said. "They're going to have to fight their way out." Pointing at the MSR, he flatly stated: "That's the only way out. If we don't hold the hill, they haven't got a chance."[28]

Fox Company's third night was going to be crucial. Sensing this, Barber paired up the wounded who could shoot with those still in one piece and then issued as much ammunition as each team could store in their fighting positions. Fully armed and more determined than ever, Barber's Marines huddled in their holes and waited.[29]

Like clockwork, the Chinese attacked at 0200. The Marine outposts reported movement and requested mortar illumination. As the flares popped, Barber's men beheld a fantastic sight in the low ground to the south: hundreds of Chinese infantry, bayonets fixed and resembling a cattle stampede, surged toward the perimeter. Fox Company responded with a chorus of red-hot steel. Mortars, artillery from Hagaru (seven miles away), concentrated small arms fire, and finally hand grenades slaughtered wave after wave of Chinese. Almost an enemy regiment was destroyed that night trying to dislodge Fox Company.[30] Barber, limping—crawling at times—roamed the lines inspiring his men. Whenever the Chinese seemed about to break through his position, he appeared, lurching ahead of a reinforcing squad of Marines.[31] Just before dawn, Barber was hit again, this time in the leg. Now forced to command from a stretcher, he prayed for the dawn. For the third straight night, the Marines had withstood the Chinese 59th Division's assaults. Barber sensed the tide was turning. Soon the Marines would take the initiative.

First light revealed the fruits of the night's work. Three complete Chinese companies lay dead on the south perimeter. Incredibly, only one Marine was wounded, and he did not even seek medical treatment.[32] Air strikes and airdrops continued to reinforce Fox Company throughout the day on 30 November. Aside from occasional sniper fire, the Chinese were content to spend the time licking their wounds. The 59th Division had spent itself.

The following night on Fox Hill was relatively quiet—aside from one of the most amazing uses of artillery seen in the Korean War. At around 0100 on 1 December, Barber's men began receiving fire from four Chinese machine guns positioned on a rocky knoll 300 meters northeast of their perimeter. Still smarting from his multiple wounds, Barber was tired of the Chinese using that piece of terrain to harass his Marines. He ordered his forward observer to coordinate a fire mission with the regimental howitzer battery at Hagaru, and the observer told the mortar section to get ready. Just as two 81-mm illumination rounds were lofted above the knoll, four rounds were shot from Hagaru. Barber's Marines watched in amazement as the illuminated knoll erupted in fire and bits of Chinese machine guns and soldiers flew high into the air. No one could believe it. All four rounds hit dead center from Hagaru, seven miles away.[33]

Daylight on 1 December brought good news to Fox Company. The breakout from Yudam-ni was under way. Barber was now more determined than ever to stay in his position until the 5th and 7th Regiments fought their way south. The relief attack, led by Lieutenant Colonel Raymond G. Davis, was a story of courage itself. Attacking throughout that day and through the night in twenty-five below zero weather, Davis' relief column reached Fox Company's perimeter shortly after 1000 on 2 December. After a final air strike called in by Barber, Davis' 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, fought its way into the perimeter, crossing through the outposts at 1130.[34] Fox company was still "King of the Hill!"

The rest has become history. Eventually, the entire 1st Marine Division fought its way south to Hungnam and, along with the rest of the X Corps, was successfully evacuated from North Korea. Barber was subsequently evacuated from Fox Hill and was hospitalized for three months. He later reached the rank of colonel, retiring from active service in 1970. For his inspired leadership and tenacious defense of Fox Hill, Barber was awarded the Medal of Honor on 20 August 1952.[35]

Barber's defense of Fox Hill teaches a valuable military lesson that most American soldiers need to understand—and did not practice in the Korean War: a numerically inferior force can hold out in a tight and well-chosen perimeter defense against a superior force—if it does not panic, fights courageously, and employs combined arms.[36] Barber's strong, selfless leadership set the stage for eventual victory. His appreciation of the terrain and his tactical vision and innate desire to do things right proved critical in the 1st Marine Division's fighting withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir. Captain William E. Barber was a rare leader who epitomized the title of one of the "Chosen Few."

NOTES

1. Heinl, Robert D., *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute, 1966), 173.
2. Fehrenbach, T. R., *This Kind of War* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), 352—53.
3. Wilson, Jim, *Retreat Hell!* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1988), 100.
4. Fehrenbach, 353.
5. Ibid., 354.
6. Hammel, Eric M., *Chosin* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1981), 95.
7. Military History Research Department of the Academy of Military Sciences, *The History of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army in the War to Resist America and Aid Korea* (Beijing, People's Republic of China: Military Science Publishing House, 1988), 60. The official Chinese history does not mention Fox Company's defense of Toktong Pass. The failure to close the pass is relegated to the 59th Division's numerous problems of ammunition supply and harsh environmental conditions (p. 61).
8. Ibid.
9. Leckie, Robert, *The March to Glory* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 31.
10. Ibid., 499.
11. Hammel, 96.
12. McCarthy, R. C., "Fox Hill," *Marine Corps Gazette* (March 1953), 18.
13. Ibid.
14. *The History of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army in the War to Resist America and Aid Korea*, 60.
15. Murphy, Edward F., *Korean War Heroes* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1992), 98.
16. Montross, Lynn, and Nicholas A. Canzona, *The Chosin Reservoir Campaign* (Washington, DC: Scholarly Press, 1976), 182.
17. Craig, Barry, *The Chosen Few* (Paduca, KY: Turner Publishing Company, 1989), 67; McCarthy, 19.
18. Wilson, 139.
19. McCarthy, 19.
20. Craig, 67.
21. Murphy, 99.
22. McCarthy, 20.
23. Fehrenbach, 234.
24. Wilson, 185.
25. Ibid., 186.
26. Wilson, 142.
27. McCarthy, 21.
28. Wilson, 187.
29. Ibid., 188.
30. Ibid., 193.
31. Murphy, 100.

32. McCarthy, 21.
33. Ibid., 22.
34. Wilson, 206.
35. Appleman, Roy E., *Escaping the Trap* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1990), 237.
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XXIII. Military Operations Other Than War: Lieutenant General Bruce Palmer and the Dominican Intervention of 1965—1966

Lawrence A. Yates

On Saturday, 24 April 1965, a group of military officers in the Dominican Republic, supported by sympathetic political leaders, launched an armed revolt against a government whose austerity programs, attempts to reform the military, and tenuous legal claim to power had alienated key segments of the population. Within twenty-four hours, the regime had fallen, and the rebels had set up a provisional "Constitutionalist" government, with the expressed purpose of returning to office Juan Bosch, a leftist politician who had himself been ousted from the presidency by conservative military officers in September 1963. Convinced at this point that Communist elements were taking over the rebel movement, U.S. Embassy officials in the Dominican capital of Santo Domingo "reluctantly" supported plans by "Loyalist" forces to move against the Constitutionalists. The attacks carried out that Sunday afternoon caused little damage but succeeded in transforming the coup d'etat into a bloody civil conflict, largely but not entirely confined to the streets of the capital.

Three days into the revolt, the U.S. Embassy continued to express confidence that Loyalist forces, including those behind General Elías Wessin y Wessin, the archconservative commander of an elite armored unit collocated with the Dominican air force at the San Isidro air base east of the city, would be able to defeat the rebels. As a precaution, however, the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson sent a U.S. naval task group into the waters off the Dominican Republic and, on Tuesday, 27 April, began a permissive evacuation of U.S. citizens and foreign nationals. After it became clear the next day that the rebels, under the leadership of Colonel Francisco Deño Caamaño, had succeeded in repulsing Loyalist attacks on the capital, President Johnson ordered nearly 2,000 marines into the country, to be followed by two battalions of the 82d Airborne Division from Fort Bragg, North Carolina. At the height of the intervention, nearly 24,000 U.S. troops, including the 82d's nine infantry battalions, would be present in the Caribbean republic. Their mission was to protect American lives and property, restore law and order, and, most important, prevent a "second Cuba" (that is, another Communist seizure of power) in the hemisphere.

At the outbreak of the Dominican revolt, Lieutenant General Bruce Palmer, Jr., was serving in the Pentagon as the Army's deputy chief of staff for operations. On Friday, 30 April, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Earle Wheeler, informed Palmer that he had been picked by the president personally to command the ground operations in the Dominican Republic and that he should deploy immediately. Palmer arrived in the country shortly after midnight Saturday morn-

ing. Within a week, he was officially designated Commander, U.S. Forces, Dominican Republic.

Upon his arrival, Palmer was briefed on the situation in Santo Domingo. U.S. marines had established a neutal International Security Zone (ISZ) on the west side of the city, elements of the 82d held a bridgehead across the Ozama River on the east side, and rebel forces operated in the gap. A tenuous cease-fire in place had gone into effect the previous day, allowing both rebel and Loyalist forces a breathing spell and time to recuperate. Since the 82d had landed at San Isidro and the division commander, Major General Robert York, had set up his headquarters near the base, Palmer could see for himself the condition of Wessin y Wessin's men. Given their demoralized state, it became clear to him that the job of preventing a rebel victory would fall mainly to U.S. forces.

As soon as he received his briefing, Palmer insisted that, despite the cease-fire, the gap between the marines and paratroopers would have to be closed, partly to facilitate communications between the two forces, but largely to deny the rebels freedom of movement. The establishment of a corridor linking the U.S. units would, in effect, isolate the bulk of the 2,000 to 4,000 armed rebel combatants in the southeastern section of the city, Ciudad Nueva. With U.S. troops on three sides of them and their backs to the Caribbean, the rebels would have to abandon their hopes for a military victory.

Palmer had been selected to command U.S. forces in the Dominican Republic because he was reputed to be sensitive to the political dimension of military operations. His demand for a corridor, or LOC, across Santo Domingo put this attribute to the test, as he discovered that virtually any military initiative in the crisis would have to be approved by policymakers in Washington after its political ramifications had been thoroughly discussed. For two days, he argued his case for the LOC forcefully on the grounds of military necessity. At one point, he talked directly with the president over a U.S. Air Force radio. In the end, Washington authorized the corridor, and at one minute after midnight on 3 May, a brigade from the 82d moved across Santo Domingo from the Ozama bridgehead to the ISZ, where the paratroopers linked up with the marines.

With the establishment of the LOC, Palmer anticipated the next step would be to mount combat operations against Ciudad Nueva. The isolation of the rebels, however, obviated large-scale U.S. military action. After 3 May, President Johnson committed the United States to a political solution to the crisis on the grounds that a lasting peace could be achieved only through a negotiated settlement acceptable to all but extremists on both sides of the civil conflict. As Palmer himself came to realize, the majority of the rebels were not Communists, and many who had taken up arms had legitimate grievances against the government they had overthrown. Communist influence in the Constitutionalist movement still had to be held in check, but that could be achieved short of employing all-out military force. As

Palmer quickly "became attuned to the critical political dimensions, both at home and abroad, of our Dominican actions," he had no qualms about placing his forces in support of peacemaking efforts by representatives from both the Johnson administration and the Organization of American States (OAS).

In the parlance of the time, U.S. military activities in the Dominican Republic were called "stability operations." According to Palmer, this meant establishing "a climate of order in which political, psychological, economic, sociological and other forces can work in a peaceful environment" to help "a country attain its legitimate aspirations in an atmosphere of tranquility." For U.S. troops, stability operations translated into maintaining a visible presence; helping restore law and order; conveying a demeanor of strict neutrality (which was only possible after late May when Palmer was directed to prevent further Loyalist attacks against rebel positions); restoring public services and utilities; patrolling; providing food and medical assistance; working with various international, U.S., and nongovernmental agencies; and, in general, returning the city to normal. Units trained in these activities were needed, and throughout the first month of the intervention, MPs, civil affairs and psychological warfare units, engineers, special operations forces, and other specialized units, together with civilian experts, flowed into the country. Some of the combat forces returned to their stations (the marines left in June), but others remained to maintain the uneasy peace and to provide the military muscle without which the political negotiations would founder.

Stability operations proved at times a source of frustration. In danger from the ubiquitous sniper or the rock-throwing demonstrator, the marines (until their departure) and paratroopers were under strict orders to show restraint. For combat troops trained in the art of fire and maneuver and in the use of deadly force, this injunction caused much consternation. Consequently, Palmer's headquarters issued a series of rules of engagement (ROE) designed to prevent an incident that might disrupt the peace process. The ROE prohibited the use of certain weapons, such as tanks, artillery, and mortars, for anything other than psychological purposes. This made sense to most of the troops in that heavy-weapons fire could ignite a conflagration in the crowded tinderbox of Santo Domingo. Other restrictions were less well received. After spending his first night in the LOC, Palmer determined that U.S. fire discipline was lax and set about to remedy the situation. Thus, the initial ROE that permitted troops to return fire when fired upon yielded gradually to a prohibition against returning small-arms fire unless one's position was in danger of being overrun. U.S. troops complained, to no avail, that this left them vulnerable to rebel snipers. At the end of his tour, Palmer conceded that excessive rules of engagement could, in fact, hurt morale. But, quite rightly, he did not question the need for strict ROE in the conduct of sensitive political-military operations.

The employment of restrictive rules of engagement in the Dominican Republic was but one issue that generated various degrees of friction between U.S. officers

locked into a traditional mindset and those who showed the flexibility to adapt to the unorthodox requirements of stability operations. General York, for example, had had a distinguished military career but one that had not prepared him for the ambiguities and political complexity of Santo Domingo. In York's opinion, the correct solution to the crisis was simply to crush the rebel movement. His views were clearly at odds with President Johnson's desire for a political settlement but readily acceptable to right-wing officers on the Loyalist side and to conservatives among U.S. officials in the capital. On one day in mid-June, it looked as though York might, in fact, impose a military solution. After sniper fire at a U.S. checkpoint turned into a full-fledged firefight, paratroopers under York's command went on the offensive and appeared on the verge of throwing the rebel force they engaged into the Ozama River. At a critical point in the battle, Palmer arrived on the scene and, in an exchange with York described by witnesses as acrimonious, ordered his subordinate to recall his men. Soon thereafter, York was reassigned to Fort Bragg. (Two years later, it should be noted, he received his third star.)

Palmer regarded the reassignment as a regretable necessity, but York's presence, in Palmer's words, created the "additional burden . . . of establishing myself as the principal military adviser to the U.S. ambassador and at the same time keeping my military people in line and supporting the declared U.S. policy of neutrality between the Dominican factions." York's departure eased the burden.

Since arriving in the strife-torn country, Palmer had followed General Wheeler's advice to stick to Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett "like a burr." He followed the same approach with Ellsworth Bunker, the chief OAS negotiator, who took time to tutor Palmer on the political complexities of the crisis. Palmer, Bennett, and Bunker met almost daily, and although the meetings were not without occasional friction, they helped to further the peace process. Using the public affairs personnel assigned to him, Palmer tried to keep U.S. forces informed, to the extent that he could, of developments in the crisis, thus providing them with an explanation for the work they were doing and an incentive to persevere, despite the hardships.

While Palmer was successful in establishing himself as the chief U.S. military adviser in the Dominican Republic, the political considerations that dictated the course of American policy at times went against his concerns as a professional soldier. One of these occasions arose in late May with the establishment by the OAS of the Inter-American Peace Force (IAPF), a multinational organization that included troops from six Latin American countries. The Johnson administration had pushed for such a force, unique in hemispheric history, in order to give regional legitimacy to what had begun as a unilateral U.S. intervention. When informed of the IAPF's formation, Palmer argued that a U.S. officer, himself, should be put in command. That way, the United States would retain its freedom of action in the crisis. The Latin American participants, however, insisted that a Brazilian officer, General Hugo Alvim, be put in command. For compelling political reasons, President Johnson, on the advise of his secretaries of state and defense, as well as

General Wheeler, concurred. Alvim would be the IAPF commander, Palmer, his deputy. Still, through some adroit maneuvering, Palmer salvaged what he could from what had been foisted upon him. The filling of key staff positions with U.S. officers and the division of the IAPF into a Latin American Brigade and a U.S. contingent, the latter under Palmer's command, precluded the eclipse of U.S. military influence in the crisis. Once the IAPF became operational, Palmer, as he had with Bennett and Bunker, established a close working relationship with Alvim, even while resisting the Brazilian's occasional attempts to acquire direct command of U.S. forces.

In late August 1965, Constitutionalist and Loyalist leaders accepted an OAS-negotiated peace settlement. Under the agreement, a Provisional Government headed by Héctor García-Godoy began the difficult process of reconciling the contending factions while laying the groundwork for national elections in mid-1966. The IAPF became an integral part of this process. In the role of peacekeepers, IAPF troops helped García-Godoy maintain law and order, and they protected his government from coup attempts from both right and left.

Neither Alvim nor Palmer thought highly of the provisional president. The archconservative Brazilian believed García-Godoy to be a Communist; the more moderate Palmer simply saw him as too willing to make concessions to the leftist rebels in an effort to involve them in the peace process. In general, however, both officers followed OAS directives, usually dispensed by Bunker, to support the government. There were times, though, when this proved difficult. When García-Godoy expressed last-minute doubts about sending IAPF troops into Ciudad Nueva to "demilitarize" the rebel stronghold, Alvim and Palmer, with Bunker's blessing, proceeded with the operation anyway.

A more serious situation arose when García-Godoy, under pressure from rebel leaders, decided to fire his chief military advisers, mostly former Loyalists who had pledged their support to the Provisional Government. In Palmer's opinion, such a move would undermine the effectiveness of the Dominican Armed Forces, which were being restructured under the peace accord. Since García-Godoy could not hope to dismiss the chiefs without the IAPF to back him up, both Alvim and Palmer let it be known that they might not carry out the directive unless ordered to do so by the highest authorities in their respective governments. Bunker, who was sympathetic to Palmer's views, tried but failed to get García-Godoy to reverse his position. When it came time to implement the decision, the military chiefs rose in rebellion. García-Godoy called on the IAPF to suppress the uprising, but Alvim at first refused, relenting only under extreme pressure from the OAS. The subsequent departure of the Dominican military chiefs, in addition to the overseas posting of extremist leaders, including Wessin y Wessin and Caamaño, from both contending factions, removed the last major obstacles to a long-term peace settlement.

By then, Alvim had become a liability to the peace process, and Bunker, a close friend of Brazil's president, secured his recall. As a face-saving measure for the Brazilian general, Palmer was asked to leave the country as well. When he left the Dominican Republic in January 1966, the crisis was all but over. Elections took place in June, and a permanent government was sworn in in July. In September, the last U.S. and IAPF troops departed.

Today, what had been referred to as stability operations in the Dominican Republic would be categorized as "military operations other than war." In such operations, it is usually the case that "political [considerations] drive military operations at every level from the strategic to the tactical," and commanders and staff officers "must adopt courses of action which legally support those [considerations] even if the courses of action appear to be unorthodox or outside what traditional doctrine had contemplated" (FM 100-20). In Lieutenant General Bruce Palmer, U.S. forces in the Dominican Republic were under the command of a professional officer who, without abdicating his military responsibilities, recognized the nontraditional requirements of stability operations and adapted to the ambiguities, complexities, and dynamics of the situation. Not all military officers possess the perspicacity, maturity, and flexibility to adjust so readily. That Palmer did possess these attributes allowed him to transcend a narrow military assessment of the crisis and to identify the "enemy" in the Dominican Republic not so much as a discrete armed group that needed to be defeated through traditional combat operations, but rather as the presence of a pervasive and dangerous instability that, however threatening to American interests, was susceptible to a political remedy. This insight enabled him to play a key role in facilitating a peaceful resolution to a fractious civil conflict. The Dominican intervention of 1965 still stands as a model of the effective employment of diplomatic initiatives backed by military power to effect a long-term settlement to a major regional crisis.

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XXIV. The Battle of Hamburger Hill: Battle Command in Difficult Terrain Against a Determined Enemy

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The Vietnam conflict wore many faces. It was at once an insurrection by indigenous guerrilla forces and an invasion by the regular army of a neighboring regime. It was a war of snipers and ambushes, booby traps and pitched battles. The location of the fighting ranged from the densely inhabited rice basket of the Mekong Delta to the remote, jungled mountains of the Central Highlands. It included both platoon-level "pacification" efforts aimed at small bands of Vietcong and corps-level operations targeted against main-force North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regiments and divisions. One would be hard-pressed to identify the typical battle command experience in this long and confusing war. But while there was no "typical" experience, current-day military leaders may find some aspects of the fighting in Vietnam instructive and relevant to today's challenges.

This study concentrates on a "big battle" of that war. Some historians may dismiss what have been called the "big battles" of Vietnam as largely irrelevant in a war supposedly aimed at winning the "hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese people. U.S. Army leaders, however, recognized that a viable pacification campaign in the shadow of main force NVA regiments was impossible. The big battles of the Vietnam War are still relevant today because, in many ways, they foreshadowed the current American military's technological paradigm.

U.S. military forces in Vietnam held a clear technological advantage over their Communist foes, just as America's current-day military counts on a technological edge against its potential enemies. In the Vietnam War, American military leaders hoped to parlay their technological superiority into quick victories at a low human cost. They tried to do this by pinpointing the enemy's forces, isolating them from support, hamstringing their maneuver capability, and finally, smothering them with overwhelming firepower. In January and February 1991, American-led coalition forces did just that in the Gulf War. But when their predecessors tried to do much the same thing in western Vietnam in May 1969, the enemy and the terrain proved intractable.

This essay will examine how a determined enemy and brutally difficult terrain combined to negate the effects of American technology and presented a dramatic challenge to a U.S. Army commander's battle command skills. The battle took place on Dong Ap Bia (Ap Bia Mountain) in the rugged, jungle-shrouded mountains along the Laotian border of South Vietnam. Rising from the floor of the western A Shau Valley, Ap Bia Mountain is a looming, solitary massif, unconnected to the ridges of the surrounding Annamite range. It dominates the northern valley, towering some 937 meters above sea level. Snaking down from its highest peak

are a series of ridges and fingers, one of the largest extending southeast to a height of 900 meters, another reaching south to a 916-meter peak. The entire mountain is a rugged, uninviting wilderness blanketed in double- and triple-canopy jungle, dense thickets of bamboo, and waist-high elephant grass. Local Montagnard tribesmen called Ap Bia "the mountain of the crouching beast."[1] Lieutenant Colonel Weldon Honeycutt, commander of the 3d Battalion, 187th Infantry (the "Rakkasans"), called it "Hill 937." The soldiers who fought there dubbed it "Hamburger Hill."[2]

The fight on Hamburger Hill occurred during Operation Apache Snow, the second part of a three-phased campaign intended to destroy NVA bases in the treacherous A Shau Valley.[3] This campaign was the latest in a long series of attempts to neutralize the A Shau, which proved a persistent thorn in the side of the previous Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) commander, General William C. Westmoreland. Each effort met with results ranging in degree from ineffectual to disastrous. Lieutenant General Richard Stilwell, commander of XXIV Corps, resolved to succeed with his operation, however, and amassed almost two divisions of infantry and a daunting array of air power to ensure victory.[4]

Leading the attack were five infantry battalions under Major General Melvin Zais, commander of the legendary 101st Airborne (Airmobile) Division. Three units were American (the 1/506th, 2/501st, and 3/187th Infantry), and two came from the 1st Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Division (the 2/1st and 4/1st ARVN).[5] Colonel Joseph Conmy, commander of the 3d Brigade of the 101st Airborne, controlled the main effort. He characterized the operation as a reconnaissance in force (RIF). His plan called for each of the five battalions to "combat assault" into the valley by helicopter on 10 May 1969 and to comb its assigned sector for enemy troops and supplies. If a battalion made heavy contact with the NVA, Conmy would reinforce it with one of the other units. In theory, the Americans, utilizing helicopters, could reposition their forces quickly enough to keep the enemy from massing on any one unit. Conversely, an American force discovering an NVA unit would fix it while the reinforcing battalion flew in to cut off the enemy's retreat and destroy him. Unfortunately, practice does not always realize theory.

The American and South Vietnamese units participating in Apache Snow knew, based on existing intelligence and previous experiences in the A Shau, that they were in for a tough fight. Beyond that, however, they had little evidence as to the enemy's actual strength and dispositions. Masters of camouflage, the NVA completely concealed their bases from aerial surveillance. When the NVA moved, they did so at night along trails covered by triple-canopy jungle, again confounding observation from above. They effected their command and control mainly by runner and wire, leaving no electronic signature for the Americans to monitor or trace. Technology, therefore, provided scant assistance to the American battalion commander trying to "see the enemy" during Apache Snow. He had to generate

his own tactical intelligence. Patrols, captured equipment, installations, documents, and occasionally prisoners provided combat commanders with the raw data from which to draw their assessment of the enemy order of battle and dispositions. Gathering this information took time, though. Moreover, intelligence about the enemy's strength and dispositions did not necessarily illuminate his commander's intent. It took days to ascertain this, and the learning experience proved decidedly unpleasant for the Americans.

At first, the battle went deceptively well. The American and South Vietnamese units experienced only light enemy contact on the first day. But documents captured by Lieutenant Colonel Honeycutt's 3/187th Infantry indicated that the entire 29th NVA Regiment, nicknamed the "Pride of Ho Chi Minh," was somewhere in the A Shau Valley. Moreover, intelligence indicated that the enemy was looking for a big fight.[6] Honeycutt was eager to oblige. Past experience indicated the enemy would resist violently for a short time and then withdraw as the Americans brought overwhelming firepower to bear against him. This was a familiar pattern in many of the larger encounters with the NVA and in the previous A Shau battles. The big battles, such as Dak To and Ia Drang, where the enemy offered prolonged, determined resistance, were rare.[7] Considering this, Honeycutt anticipated his battalion would be able to handle whatever he found on Hill 937. As insurance, he prudently requested and received the brigade's reserve, his own Bravo Company. He intended to find the NVA force located in his part of the valley and punish it before it could escape into Laos.

On 11 May, Honeycutt dispersed his Rakkasans and scoured the vicinity to the north and northwest of Ap Bia Mountain. His men swept west toward the nearby Laotian border and south up the north slope of the mountain itself. When Bravo Company made heavy contact with some NVA late in the day, Honeycutt responded quickly by directing Cobra helicopter gunships, known as aerial rocket artillery (ARA), to support a hasty assault. Unfortunately, in the heavy jungle, the Cobras mistook the battalion command post for an NVA unit and attacked and killed two Americans and wounded thirty-five, including Honeycutt himself.[8] The fratricide incident temporarily eliminated all battalion command and control of the battle and forced 3/187th to withdraw into night defensive positions. Bravo Company was separated from its objective, the summit of Dong Ap Bia, by less than 1,000 meters. The incident confirmed what Honeycutt already suspected, that there was an enemy force on the mountain. However, the contact was serious enough for him to adjust his estimate of the enemy's strength from "a few trail watchers" to a reinforced platoon or even a company.[9] The Rakkasans could still deal with a force that size, but they would have to concentrate to do so.

For the next three days, Honeycutt fought the mountain and the NVA to bring his scattered companies together for a coordinated battalion attack. Despite the fact that, since the initial assault, no company was more than about 1,500 meters from the crest of the mountain, it took two days to consolidate the battalion for a

three-company assault. Time and again, the American infantrymen found themselves hampered as much by the topography as by the enemy. The rugged terrain slowed dismounted movement to a crawl. Between 12 and 14 May, for example, Delta Company was virtually immobilized when it went down a steep ravine and was caught there by the enemy. In one grueling five-hour period, the company labored to advance a total of only 500 meters.[10] The steep, mud-covered slopes, more than the enemy, kept this company from fulfilling Honeycutt's intent. In the end, the troops had to abandon their attack and withdraw the way they had come.

These three days were a period of intensely unpleasant "discovery learning" for Honeycutt and his men. Map reconnaissance and helicopter overflights did not indicate that his initial scheme of maneuver was impractical. It took Delta Company's three-day ordeal to do so. Though Honeycutt had a long and distinguished record as a combat commander in both Vietnam and Korea, he underestimated Ap Bia Mountain and the NVA facing him. Although his estimate of the enemy strength was incorrect, his miscalculation was not immediately apparent to him or to any of the American leadership. It took three days of assaults by Bravo and Charlie Companies, each bloodily repulsed, before the situation became clearer. The enemy was stronger than anticipated, much stronger than company strength, and he grew more powerful every night as he received reinforcements from Laos. The NVA commander's demonstrated tenacity and willingness to replace heavy losses indicated he intended to put up a stiff fight for Hill 937.

By 13 May, it had become clear to the brigade commander, Conmy, that Ap Bia Mountain contained more NVA than the 3/187th Infantry could handle alone. At midday, he decided to send 1/506th Infantry (the Currahees) north from their RIF area of operations to assist Honeycutt. This action conformed to the American tactic of maneuvering an uncommitted battalion to support a battalion in heavy contact. Hoping to cut off enemy reinforcements to Dong Ap Bia, Conmy ordered the 1/506th Infantry to attack north, cross-country, to hit the NVA facing Honeycutt from the rear.[11] Starting from positions that were only about 4,000 meters from Hill 937, Conmy could have reasonably expected the Currahees to be ready to provide support to 3/187th Infantry no later than the morning of 15 May. Yet it took 1/506th Infantry five and a half days, until 19 May, to reach Honeycutt. By the standards of dismounted movement routinely practiced by today's light infantry at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), 1/506th Infantry's pace was glacial In one forty-hour period over 13—14 May, the battalion was able to cover only 1,500 of the 4,000 meters separating it from its objective on Ap Bia Mountain. Rough terrain and the ever-present enemy snipers made the difference. Conmy and the 1/506th Infantry, like Honeycutt, learned the hard way that Ap Bia Mountain and the enemy on it defied previous experience.

Treacherous terrain and an enemy that knew how to exploit it continually threw off the tempo of American tactical operations at Hamburger Hill. Both airborne infantry battalions were "ground-bound" in the jungle, maneuvering at the pace of

their foot soldiers. Not even the helicopter, the transcendent theme of American technological superiority in this war, offered much hope of speeding up maneuver. Steep gradients and dense vegetation provided few natural landing zones in the vicinity of the mountain. The rugged terrain also masked the NVA positions, making it nearly impossible to suppress enemy air defense fires. Throughout the battle, unseen NVA soldiers maneuvered in the jungle around the American landing zones and shot down or damaged numerous helicopters with small arms fire and even rocket-propelled grenades. In fact, the dense terrain covered the movement of enemy forces so completely that it created the effect of a nonlinear battlefield. The NVA continuously slipped behind the American lines, hitting logistical support landing zones (LZs) and command posts (CPs) no less than four times. This problem caused each company and battalion commander to leave a substantial portion of his force in the rear to cover his LZ and CP and ensure the flow of supplies, the evacuation of casualties, and uninterrupted command and control. In addition to securing their LZs, attacking companies had to provide for 360-degree security as they maneuvered, since the terrain prevented them from mutually supporting each other until the final assaults on the mountain. Even so, time and again, NVA platoon- and company-size elements struck maneuvering American forces from the flanks and rear as the Rakkasans and Currahees directed their attention toward the mountain top.

The effectiveness of U.S. maneuver forces was further constrained by the narrow trails along which the Americans advanced through heavy vegetation. For much of the battle, each of the attacking American companies assaulted on a squad or platoon front. Thus, at the point of attack, American squads and platoons frequently faced NVA platoons and companies. To overcome this firepower disparity, the American infantrymen traditionally responded with artillery and close air support. With most small arms engagements on Hamburger Hill limited to tens of meters, however, American indirect fire support was severely restricted. Often, the enemy was too close and the situation too fluid for units in contact to get timely, accurate supporting fires. In close combat, American infantrymen had to succeed with their own direct fires or, as frequently happened on Ap Bia, pull back and await artillery, close air support, and ARA. Even then, there was no guarantee that the artillery and close air would do the job. The dense jungle and wild, irregular contours of Ap Bia served to dampen the effects of American fire support. NVA bunkers were well sited to take advantage of these contours and the jungle cover. Furthermore, bunkers were well built, with substantial overhead cover that withstood days of pounding. Over time, U.S. bombs and napalm stripped away the foliage and exposed the NVA's bunkers. But they were so numerous and so well constructed that they could not be destroyed by indirect firepower alone.[12] Napalm and infantry recoilless rifle fire proved to be the weapons of choice for busting the bunkers.

Under these fluid conditions, battle command was decidedly decentralized. Though Honeycutt constantly prodded his company commanders to push on, he

could to do little to direct their tactics as they fought through the jungle. Only in the closing days of the battle, when his companies maneuvered in close proximity over the barren mountain top, was he able to coordinate mutual support among his subordinates.[13] Fire support for units in contact with the enemy was also decentralized. Artillery, ARA, and close air support (with airborne foward air controller [FAC] assistance) were responsive to units down to platoon level. Yet in the evolving, often confusing, maneuver battle, it was inevitable that command and control of supporting fires suffered. Fighting on Ap Bia Mountain produced no less than five incidents of air-to-ground fratricide over a ten-day period. Pilots (and sometimes the FACs) were unable to distinguish friend from enemy in the intense and confusing fighting around the mountain. In at least one incident, the pilots themselves became lost and attacked more than a kilometer off their intended target.[14]

On 14 and 15 May, Honeycutt launched two coordinated battalion attacks against Ap Bia Mountain. Each day, he expected support from 1/506th Infantry, and when it failed to appear, he attacked alone. Honeycutt rightly believed that each day he left the North Vietnamese undisturbed on the mountain gave them more time to improve their defenses. Nevertheless, both attacks failed. Although Honeycutt's Bravo Company attacked to within 150 meters of the summit, enemy fire, steep terrain, and rain combined to force the Rakkasans back down the slope. On 16 May, 1/506th Infantry attacked north toward Dong Ap Bia but was stopped after seizing Hill 916—still some 2,000 meters from its objective. With the two battalions so far out of supporting distance, the brigade commander ordered Honeycutt to wait for 1/506th Infantry.

About the same time 1/506th Infantry attacked, the 101st Airborne Division commander, Zais, experienced a new and uncomfortable aspect of battle command—one with which modern commanders have become increasingly familiar. The Associated Press "discovered" the battle at Ap Bia and sent correspondent Jay Sharbutt to investigate it—on the ground. Sharbutt met with Zais and, in the course of the interview, challenged his decision to prosecute the battle.[15] Zais answered Sharbutt's questions politely and honestly, but the journalist was not satisfied. His subsequent newspaper accounts of "Hamburger Hill" stirred up a storm of controversy that swept the nation and resounded in the halls of Congress.[16] For the next four days, more and more journalists poured into the base camps, firebases, headquarters, and landing zones supporting the battle. Commanders found they had a new and largely unwelcome duty: conducting public relations while also fighting a battle.

The next day, 17 May, 1/506th Infantry attacked again but made little progress. Although the Currahees were still almost 1,500 meters from the top of Ap Bia Mountain, the brigade commander ordered a coordinated two-battalion assault for 18 May. With 1/506th Infantry attacking from the south and 3/187th Infantry attacking from the north, he hoped the enemy would not be able to concentrate

against either battalion. Fighting to within seventy-five meters of the summit, Delta Company, 3/187th Infantry, almost realized Conmy's wish. Unfortunately, with every officer in the company killed or wounded and over 50 percent casualties, the battle degenerated into an uncontrollable brawl, with NVA and GIs exchanging small arms and grenade fire within twenty meters of each other. Honeycutt committed three companies into the fray, coordinating their movements from a light observation helicopter. As they prepared for the final assault, however, a roaring thunderstorm washed over the battlefield, reduced visibility to nothing, and caused all firing to stop. Unable to advance in the torrential rains on a battlefield turned into a quagmire, the Rakkasans reluctantly withdrew down the mountain again. The 1/506th Infantry met with heavy opposition for the first time in the battle, but its three converging companies managed nonetheless to get to about 1,200 meters of the top of Dong Ap Bia.

In view of the heavy casualties already sustained in the battle, Zais seriously considered stopping the attack on Dong Ap Bia. Although he was under great pressure from the unwanted attention of the press, he decided to continue the fight. Both his corps commander Lieutenant General Stilwell and the MACV commander, General Creighton Abrams, backed him. He decided to commit three fresh battalions—the 2/501st Infantry, 2/3d Infantry (1st ARVN Division), and 2/506th Infantry. The 3/187th Infantry's casualties to this point were staggering. Not counting replacements, Alpha and Bravo Companies had lost 50 percent of their original strength, while Charlie and Delta Companies had lost 80 percent. Furthermore, two of the four original company commanders were casualties, as well as eight of twelve platoon leaders.[17] Considering these crippling losses, Zais initially decided to relieve the 3/187th Infantry with the 2/506th Infantry. Honeycutt, however, demanded that Zais allow the Rakkasans to take the mountain, and the division commander relented.[18]

The Americans launched the final attack on Dong Ap Bia on the morning of 20 May 1969. The Rakkasans had been reinforced with a company from 2/506th Infantry, and the division had airmobiled two additional battalions onto the battlefield.[19] Ten days after the battle had begun, the 101st Airborne Division finally brought overwhelming combat power to bear against the NVA. The attack began with two hours of close air support and ninety minutes of artillery prep fires. Four battalions attacked simultaneously, and within two hours, 3/187th Infantry became the first battalion to reach the top of Ap Bia. Some of the enemy chose to flee, but many fought in their bunkers to the end. The 3/187th Infantry finally secured Hill 937 about 1700 on 20 May.

The ten day Battle of Hamburger Hill had cost 70 American dead and 372 wounded. To take the position, the Americans eventually committed five infantry battalions, about 1,800 men, and ten artillery batteries.[20] In addition, the U.S. Air Force flew 272 attack sorties and expended more than 1 million pounds of bombs and 152,000 pounds of napalm.[21] This massed firepower took a devastating toll

on the NVA. The 7th and 8th Battalions of the 29th NVA Regiment were virtually wiped out. Over 630 dead NVA were discovered on and around the battlefield, and many more undoubtedly covered the trails and draws leading back into Laos.[22] Yet the repercussions of the battle were more political than military. Questions raised by the press concerning the necessity of the battle stirred controversy for weeks after the fighting stopped. These issues flared up again when the 101st Airborne quietly abandoned the hill to the enemy in June. Eventually, the investigation into the Battle of Hamburger Hill reached Congress and led to a reappraisal of American strategy in Vietnam.

The Battle of Hamburger Hill was fought twenty-six years ago. Over the intervening time, the U.S. Army has changed a great deal. Its doctrine, equipment, and organization have developed to support a rapidly evolving mission. Modern day commanders, nonetheless, can still glean some important insights from the Battle of Hamburger Hill. To be successful in such operations, commanders must see the enemy, themselves, and the terrain in order to visualize the successful conduct of the battle. On Dong Ap Bia, the rugged terrain clouded the American commanders' abilities to see themselves and their enemy.

For a commander to see himself on the battlefield, he has to be able to do more than merely track the locations of friendly units. A commander must know how his unit (or units) will behave on the battlefield, and he must understand how the impact of terrain changes the way his unit or units operate. The tortuous terrain of Dong Ap Bia reduced light infantry maneuver to a crawl. The 1/506th Infantry spent five days en route to support 3/187th Infantry, a move the 3d Brigade initially expected to take one day. Similarly, Delta Company, 3/187th, spent two days trapped in a ravine, which delayed the concentration of Honeycutt's combat power. Besides reducing ground maneuver, the terrain practically negated the tactical advantage of the lift helicopter. Up until the end of the battle, helicopter operations around Dong Ap Bia were hazardous in the extreme. It was not until 19 May, when most of the NVA had been killed or driven up the summit of the mountain, that helicopters were used to position the reinforcing battalions tactically.

Besides hampering the commander's ability to predict his unit's performance on the battlefield, the dense terrain made it difficult to know the enemy. While the Americans knew an NVA regiment was in the A Shau Valley, the densely jungled terrain concealed the fact that the enemy had up to two entire battalions on the mountain itself. Actual enemy strength on Ap Bia was only confirmed by military intelligence on 18 May, long after Zais realized that there were too many enemy for 3/187th Infantry to handle without support. The privilege of learning that hard fact was paid for in the blood of the Rakkasans as they fought alone between 11 and 16 May. The difficulty in making this intelligence assessment was multiplied by the fact that the enemy used the terrain to mask his flow of supplies and reinforcements onto the mountain every night until the end of the battle.

The terrain also affected the enemy's tactics on the battlefield. It masked his movements, forcing the Americans to disperse their forces for all-round security. The NVA adapted their defensive tactics to maximize these terrain benefits. They probed American positions nightly and conducted several deadly sapper attacks on American night defensive positions (and a firebase). And they used the terrain to conceal their bypassed units, which subsequently attacked the Americans in the flanks and rear with disastrous effect. These counterattacks were all the more devastating when they were made against U.S. units that were pinned down by hundreds of carefully prepared bunkers and fighting positions. Hidden in the folds of the mountain, the bunkers were sited to thwart the accuracy and effectiveness of American air and fire support.

American tactics in Vietnam relied on overwhelming firepower—chiefly close air support, artillery, and ARA—to reduce friendly casualties while overcoming the enemy's advantage in numbers and, in some cases, dismounted maneuver. But while fire support contributed significantly to the victory at Dong Ap Bia, it proved a two-edged sword. Although American firepower created staggering enemy casualties and limited his ability to mass maneuver forces, preparatory fires seldom neutralized the NVA positions. The dense jungle and the sharp relief of the hill attenuated the concentration of firepower, as did the enemy's well-prepared defenses. Honeycutt also held that ARA was chiefly responsible for crippling two U.S. attacks that might have succeeded based on the courage and gallantry shown by the ground maneuver forces.

Ultimately, the Battle of Hamburger Hill proved that the key ingredient in successful battle command is the commander himself. At Dong Ap Bia, Honeycutt met a highly skilled enemy in unexpected numbers who displayed unprecedented determination to fight. This enemy had carefully chosen the battlefield terrain to neutralize the effects of American technology while maximizing the remarkable light infantry skills of his own soldiers. Only Honeycutt's drive and determination kept his battalion fighting despite crippling losses, sagging morale, bad press, and crushing pressure from his chain of command. His strength of will (with support from Conmy and Zais) overcame every adversity the terrain, weather, enemy, and fate could heap on him and helped him see the battle through to a successful conclusion.

NOTES

1. Samuel Zaffiri, *Hamburger Hill, May 11—20, 1969* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988), 1.
2. Ibid., 186. Hamburger Hill was so-named because the soldiers said the mountain "turned men into hamburger" during the battle.
3. Ibid., 48—50.
4. Ibid., 49—50.
5. Ibid., 58.
6. Ibid., 70—74.
7. Ibid., 151.
8. Ibid., 81.
9. Ibid., 83.
10. Ibid., 95.
11. Ibid., 118, 131.
12. Zaffiri, 208. The shelling also produced the undesired side effect of grinding the west face of the mountain into a "giant mud slough" up which the 3/187th Infantry had to crawl.
13. Honeycutt controlled both of the final two assaults from a light observation helicopter.
14. Zaffiri, 148.
15. Ibid., 177.
16. Ibid., 176—77.
17. Ibid., 204.
18. Ibid., 207.
19. The 2/501st Infantry was flown in 800 meters northeast of the summit and 2/3d ARVN 1,000 meters to the southeast of the mountain.
20. Zaffiri, 4. The artillery fired 21,732 rounds throughout the battle.
21. Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 144.
22. Zaffiri, 244.

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