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PRINCIPLES OF WAR: THE SELMA CAMPAIGN

MAJOR PETER N. BLAUFARB

84-0250

"insights into tomorrow"

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AUTHOR(S) MAJOR PETER N. BLAUFARB, USAF

FACULTY ADVISOR MAJOR NEAL CERTAIN, ACSC/EDOWC

SPONSOR MAJOR JOHN DOROUGH, ACSC/EDCJ

Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of
requirements for graduation.

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
AIR UNIVERSITY
MAXWELL AFB, AL 36112

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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Presents a military history of the Civil War's Selma Campaign, emphasizing the deployment and employment of Union and Confederate forces, and an analysis of the campaign using the 12 principles of war contained in APM 1-1. This project also contains a guided discussion lesson plan for the study of the principles of war and the Selma Campaign.		

PREFACE

If the principles of war (as contained in AFM 1-1) are regarded as "generally accepted major truths which have been proven successful in the art and science of conducting war," (18:2-4) then one might reasonably expect the study of a military war fighting operation to reveal the application of some, most, or possibly all the principles of war. In fact, it is the purpose of this project to examine the Selma Campaign of the American Civil War and analyze it for evidence of the application of those principles. To accomplish that purpose, a history of the Selma Campaign is presented which emphasizes the deployment and employment of Union and Confederate forces. Following the history, a principle-by-principle of war analysis of the campaign highlights those military actions or events that demonstrate the application or oversight of each principle by the opposing players. Although the Selma Campaign occurred nearly 120 years ago and the principles of war have been recently revised and expanded (from nine to 12 principles), I think you will be as surprised as I was to find that this campaign indeed reveals examples of the application of each principle. Finally, following the analysis of the campaign, there is a guided discussion lesson plan for use in the study of the principles of war and the Selma Campaign.

But before you begin reading the history of the Selma campaign, I want to alert you to three items of style. First, this history of the Selma Campaign is a running narrative. In other words, it frequently shifts back and forth between Union and Confederate activities. Although this approach requires a reader's close attention, it permits a more accurate time sequence portrayal of events. Second, at certain junctions, lengthy quotes are used. In almost every case, the purpose of the quote is two-fold; it substantiates a point and gives you the flavor of 19th century military writing. Finally, when citing Union and Confederate units (e.g., divisions, brigades, and regiments), I have used a combination of upper and lower case letters. For example, since the Confederates did not number their units but referred to them using their commanders' names, you will find Confederate unit cites beginning with an upper case letter (e.g. Chalmers' Division and Jackson's Division). On the other hand, Union unit cites will begin with upper case letters when referred to by their numerical designations (e.g. the Second

Division) and lower case letters when referred to using the commanders' names (e.g. Upton's division was the Fourth Division). Hopefully, this alerts you to stylistic perturbations in the text that might have otherwise distracted you.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank Major (Lieutenant Colonel selectee) Neal Certain for his assistance in developing this project and Mrs. Margaret Tucker for her typing support.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Peter N. Blaufarb received a B.A. (History) degree in 1969 from Allegheny College, Pennsylvania. Upon graduation from Allegheny College, he received his Air Force commission via AFROTC. In January 1971, Major Blaufarb received an M.Ed. (History) degree from Mansfield University, Pennsylvania and shortly thereafter entered active duty. Major Blaufarb is a personnel officer and he has served assignments in nonappropriated funds management, social actions, and morale, welfare, and recreation. Major Blaufarb is a 1978 Squadron Officer School distinguished graduate. Prior to attending Air Command and Staff College, Major Blaufarb served as an action officer and section chief within the Directorate of Personnel Plans, Headquarters, USAF.

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Chapter One

SETTING THE STAGE

As the fall of 1864 approached, the fate of the Confederacy began to unfold. The South's two great armies, General Robert E. Lee's in Virginia and General Joseph E. Johnston's in Tennessee, were being seriously challenged by the armies of Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant (commander of all Union armies) and Major General William T. Sherman. The face-off in Virginia between Grant and Lee had stagnated as Grant laid siege to Petersburg and Richmond. To the southwest, however, Sherman doggedly stalked Johnston from Chattanooga, Tennessee into Georgia. After more than 15 battles, capped by the Union victory at Jonesboro, Georgia on September 1, 1864, General John B. Hood (who had replaced Johnston) decided to withdraw from Atlanta. A subsequent Confederate defeat at Allatoona, Georgia convinced Hood to leave Georgia altogether and repair to Alabama and Mississippi.

Grant wanted Sherman to pursue Hood, but Sherman had other designs. Sherman preferred to leave Major General George H. Thomas to defend Tennessee, where Hood was expected to invade eventually. With Thomas in position to counter Hood, Sherman planned to march from Atlanta to the Atlantic. After reaching the ocean, Sherman would march north to help Grant defeat Lee. In early November 1864, Grant approved Sherman's plan.

In preparation for his "March to the Sea," Sherman asked Grant in September 1864, for a capable officer to lead his cavalry. In return, Grant asked Lieutenant General Philip H. Sheridan, Commander of the Army of the Potomac's Cavalry Corps, to recommend an officer who could do the job. Sheridan replied, "I have ordered [then Brigadier] General Wilson to report to Sherman. He is the best man for the position" (4:282). Grant then informed Sherman, "I believe Wilson will add fifty per cent to the effectiveness of your cavalry" (14:282).

Wilson had graduated from West Point in 1860. His academic record entitled him to the first position, but the man was a habitual brawler. Always in trouble and amassing demerits, he still managed to graduate among the top ten. His first assignment, with the Topographic Engineers, took him to the Pacific Northwest. With the outbreak of the war he requested a transfer to a combat position and went to Tennessee to join Grant's army. There he organized Grant's topographic section into the equivalent of a modern day intelligence section. Wilson impressed Grant and Wilson rose to lieutenant colonel. In his staff position, however, lieutenant colonel was the highest rank Wilson could attain. To remedy that situation, Grant, in 1863, promoted Wilson to brigadier general of volunteers. The opportunity for combat Wilson had waited for finally arrived with his assignment as Chief of the Cavalry Bureau. Although never

having served with the cavalry before, Wilson completely reorganized that branch, rearming it with the new Spencer carbines and obtaining new mounts (17:40).

Thus, Grant sent Wilson to Sherman with the intention that Wilson would assist Sherman's "March to the Sea" by commanding a strong cavalry force. In addition, he hoped Wilson would be allowed to move south into Alabama. In Alabama, Wilson could aid Major General E.R.S. Canby (who had been ordered to move on Mobile, Alabama) as well as Sherman. Additionally, Wilson's move into Alabama could strike the Confederacy's greatest industrial area, such as it was, and severely damage or destroy the South's war sustaining capabilities. Thomas agreed with Grant's proposal and wrote Sherman saying, "I hope you will adopt Grant's idea turning Wilson loose, rather than undertake the plan of a march with the whole force through Georgia to the sea, ..." (9:211). Although Sherman at first disagreed with setting Wilson loose, he eventually would send Wilson to Thomas to help defend Tennessee. Later developments, in fact, would result in Wilson's striking out into Alabama with an independent force.

Under Sherman, Wilson's first job was to fully mount and equip Brevet Major General Kilpatrick's 4,500 man division which would accompany Sherman on the "March to the Sea." Next, Wilson had to prepare the remaining cavalry divisions to aid Thomas in the defeat of General John Bell Hood in Tennessee (14:283).

Despite his personal feelings, on November 9, 1864, General Sherman issued orders for the reorganization of the Cavalry Corps of the Military Department of the Mississippi. Accordingly, Wilson went to Nashville to serve with Thomas. By November 14th, Wilson had 10,000 troops under his command. After only four weeks, Wilson and his new corps fought in the Battle of Nashville. Although little time had elapsed since the cavalry's reorganization, they were successful in combat and Hood was defeated (8:133).

Immediately following the Battle of Nashville, Wilson established headquarters at Huntsville, Alabama, nine miles north of the Tennessee River. Huntsville's run-down condition and inaccessibility caused Wilson to move his headquarters to Gravelly Springs, Alabama. The corps was placed in cantonments stretching from Gravelly Springs to Waterloo Landing. Interestingly, Wilson's deployment to Alabama resulted from Thomas' contention that his army was ill-prepared to actively pursue Hood into Alabama or Mississippi following the Battle of Nashville. Consequently, Grant opted for a cavalry expedition into the region in lieu of a full-scale pursuit of Hood.

During January and February 1865, Wilson conducted intense training in the cantonments. Despite all types of weather, drills and inspections were conducted. Wilson later said, "The final victory over Forrest and the Rebel Cavalry was won by patient industry and instruction while in the cantonments of Gravelly Springs and Waterloo" (16:38).

To be sure, camp life was neither glamorous nor comfortable. The troops worked hard each day and had to forage their own food from the surrounding countryside. The little food supplied to them was terrible and hardly worth eating. Commenting on some food supplies, Captain T.C. Gilpin, of Brevet Major General Upton's Fourth Division, said:

They also sent us compressed cakes which Lun, our mess cook, calls 'desecrated vegetables'. We have boiled, baked, fried, stewed, pickled, sweetened, salted it, and tried it in puddings, cakes and pies; but it has set all modes of cooking at defiance, so the boys break it up and smoke it in their pipes. They say the Dutch of the 'Fourt' Missouri' know how to cook it, but we are too proud to learn (15:623).

With practically all their time occupied, the troops pursued recreation during their free time. Two favorite pastimes of the troops were Bible reading and card playing. With tongue in cheek, Gilpin explained:

Bullets play some very funny tricks; sometimes a testament or deck of cards will deflect a bullet from the heart of some mother's darling, and for that reason one should read his testament and play cards when he goes for a soldier (15:638).

Notwithstanding all these inconveniences, the cavalry corps developed into a proficient military force.

Grant's original plan for the cavalry expedition into Alabama called for Wilson's cavalry force to be 5,000 strong. However, both Thomas and Wilson felt this number would be insufficient for the task and vulnerable to defeat. Wilson strongly urged that he be allowed to use his entire cavalry force as an independent command. This, he felt, would insure the defeat of Forrest and the capture of Selma, Tuscaloosa, Montgomery, and Columbus (16:38). In addition, it would more likely insure that Hood could not interfere with Sherman's movement and would divert the Confederates from Canby's activity at Mobile.

On February 23rd, in a meeting between Wilson, Grant, and Thomas, Grant approved Wilson's plan. After striking Selma and Montgomery, Grant told Wilson he could move to Mississippi or Georgia depending on the conditions at the time. Therefore, Wilson received "the amplest latitude as an independent commander" (6:5).

During late January and early February, Wilson's corps increased to six divisions commanded by Brigadier Generals E. McCook, Eli Long, Edward Hatch, R.W. Johnson, J.F. Knipe, and Brevet Major General Emory Upton. Early in February orders

arrived informing Wilson that Johnson's division would be removed from his command and sent to Tennessee. Knipe's division would be sent south to join Canby at Mobile and Hatch's division to Eastport, Mississippi to guard the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers. Wilson's three remaining divisions plus the Fourth Regular Cavalry numbered 13,500 (6:10).

On March 11th, Wilson reviewed Long's Second Division. The glamour that usually accompanied such a ceremony was absent. Neither women nor newspaper correspondents were present and there was not a Congressman within 100 miles (15:619). Wilson's shunning of Union officials and newspapermen served its purpose. For although Confederate Lieutenant General Richard Taylor and Major General Nathan B. Forrest knew the enemy was concentrating near Gravelly Springs, they had no idea as to their strength or mission (12:197).

As for the Confederates, they were busily reorganizing their forces in eastern Mississippi and northern Alabama in anticipation of an invasion. From Corinth, Mississippi, on December 27th, Nathan B. Forrest issued his men 20-days furlough instructing them to return home and acquire new clothing, arms, recruits, and mounts. While in route, they were to harass, as much as possible, any Union troops in the area (13:511-512).

In early January, Forrest sent Brigadier General P.H. Roddey and his Brigade east from Corinth to watch the Tennessee River and to report any enemy movements from Gravelly Springs. However, Roddey was unexpectedly attacked by Colonel William J. Palmer who in mid-January was ordered to move into northern Alabama, defeat Roddey's force, and destroy Hood's supply train. Palmer succeeded, striking Roddey while most of his men were at their homes. Ironically, Roddey's failure brought Forrest another star. As a result of Palmer's raid, General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard suggested "all the cavalry of the department [should] be put under one commanding general -- Forrest" (5:420). Late in January, Richard Taylor, commander of the area from the Chattahoochee River to the Mississippi River, enacted Beauregard's suggestion by promoting Forrest to Lieutenant General and appointing him Commander of Cavalry of the District of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana (5:420).

As the new commander, one of Forrest's first acts was to consolidate his command. Brigadier General William H. Jackson received a division composed of Colonel Tyree H. Bell's and Colonel Edward Rucker's Tennessee Brigades, and Brigadier General L.S. Ross' Texans. Three Mississippi brigades commanded by Brigadier Generals Frank Armstrong, Wirt Adams and Peter B. Starke formed another division commanded by Brigadier General James R. Chalmers. Forrest also commanded Brigadier General Dan Adams' forces which were in the District of Mississippi. In all, Forrest had nearly 10,000 men under his command (13:514; 16:39; 5:422).

During late February, both Wilson's and Forrest's concern about the other's activities increased. On the 23rd, while Wilson met with Grant and Thomas, a Union detachment went to Rienzi, Mississippi to discuss the possibility of supplying Union prisoners with shoes, clothing, and blankets. Under a flag of truce they met and talked with Forrest for seven hours. More important, however, Wilson sent with this party Captain Lewis H. Hosea, "one of his most observant officers" (5:423) to gather information concerning the condition of the country, its food supply, military resources, and especially to estimate Forrest's state of mind and his general intentions. Returning from the trip, Hosea reported to Wilson. Among other things, Hosea related that Forrest, upon hearing Wilson was a West Point graduate and a former engineer officer, replied that "he knew nothing of military tactics, except what he had learned in actual campaigning." Forrest then added, "But I always make it a rule to get there first with the most men" (5:424). Apparently the Confederate general, despite any hardships, intended to defend fiercely northern Alabama.

On March 1st, Major E.B. Beaumont dispatched an order from Wilson to Upton concerning a future crossing place over the Tennessee River. The order instructed Upton to "send a staff officer down to Waterloo Landing to ascertain whether it is practicable to embark the troops of your command at that place" (19: Pt.1, 808). Wilson received an answer on March 15th, that Waterloo Landing was satisfactory for the transit.

On March 19th, with the crossing ready, Wilson informed Thomas his corps was fully prepared and they would march the following morning. From all he could gather, Wilson told Thomas, Forrest appeared to be concentrating his force about Tuscaloosa. Therefore, he hoped to move as rapidly as possible to the Black Warrior River before Forrest could prepare for his arrival (8:28). On March 20th, however, Wilson notified Brigadier General Whipple, Chief-of-Staff to Thomas, that due to a delay in the arrival of necessary forage, the corps could not proceed south (8:37). Heavy spring rains also contributed to the delay, but by the 21st, all was set for the crossing of the Tennessee (8:135,142). A 250 mile march to Selma lay before them.

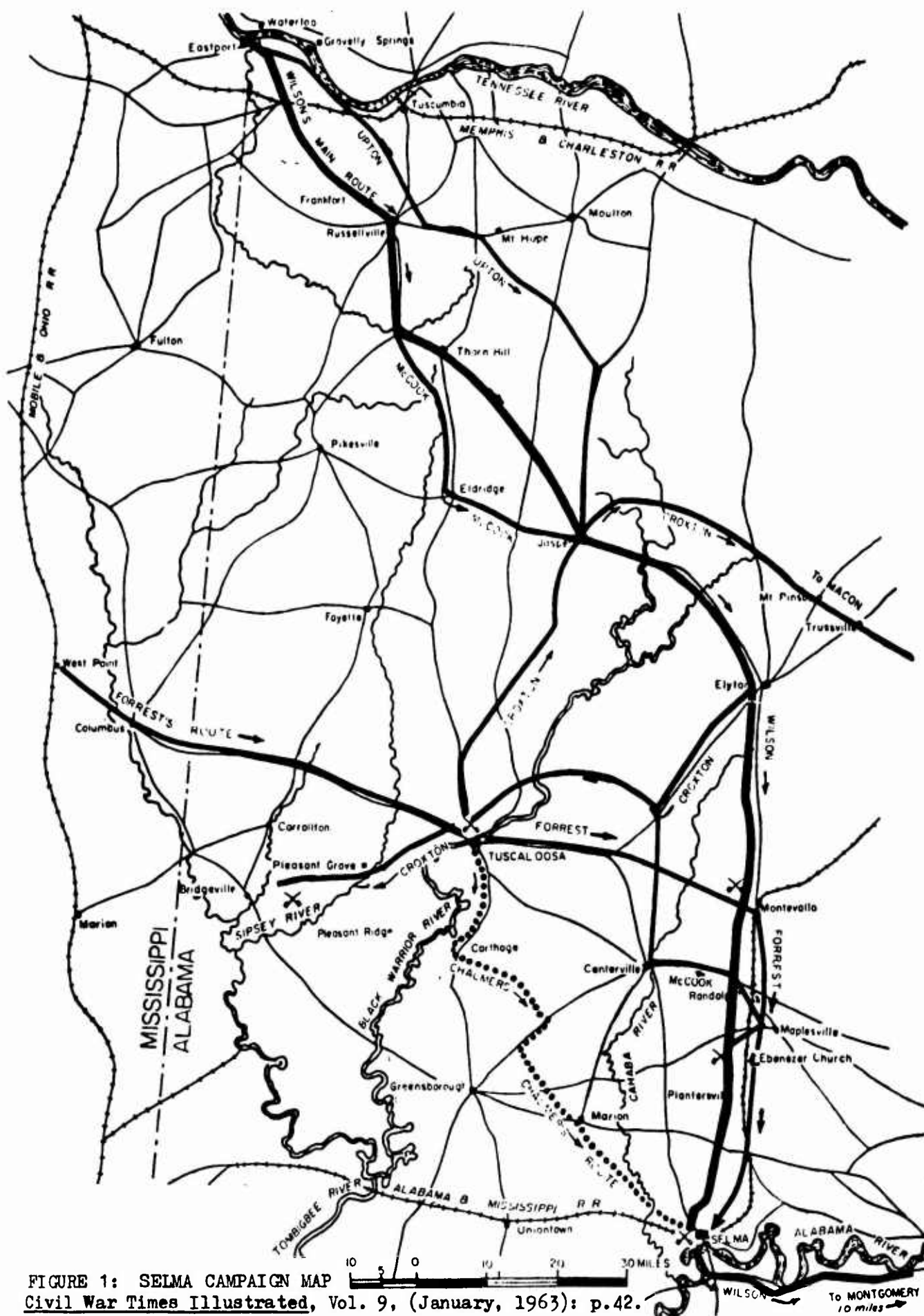


FIGURE 1: SELMA CAMPAIGN MAP
Civil War Times Illustrated, Vol. 9, (January, 1963): p.42.

Chapter Two

ON TO SELMA

On March 22nd, the campaign began. Lieutenant W.L. Curry of the First Ohio recalled:

Never can I forget the brilliant scene, as regiment after regiment filed gaily out of camp, decked in all the paraphernalia of war, with gleaming arms and guidons given to wanton breeze. Stirring bugle songs woke the slumbering echoes of the woods; cheer upon cheer went up from joyful lips, and brave hearts beat high with anticipation. But all knew that, like the conquistadores of Cortez, they burned their ships behind them when they left the Tennessee, staking all upon success (16:38).

The Union corps was well trained and equipped and Wilson could proudly boast he had under his command the greatest cavalry force ever assembled on this continent (16:38; 13:518).

The first 80 miles to be covered were through the mountainous region of northwestern Alabama. Supplying a large force in such a desolate region posed a serious problem. Wilson calculated the campaign would not last more than 60 days and so he prepared accordingly. Each trooper carried five-days light rations in his haversack, one extra set of horse shoes, and 100 rounds of ammunition. Pack mules carried another five-days rations of hard bread and ten-days of sugar and salt. The supply train included 250 wagons carrying 45-days supply of coffee, 20 of sugar, 15 of salt, and eight rounds of ammunition per man. In addition, the corps had a pontoon train of 30 canvas boats in anticipation of the many streams and rivers to be crossed (12:190-191).

Heavy spring rains not only caused the streams and rivers to overflow, but many of the roads were either in miserable condition or impassable. Since Wilson primarily wanted to advance rapidly, he ordered all wagons to be returned to the Tennessee as soon as they were emptied. When General Long received the instructions he mistakenly read "extra wagons" as "extra majors." He replied to Wilson that he could not comply with the order since he had no "extra majors" to speak of. Within a few hours the whole affair was settled and the "extra wagons" went back to the Tennessee while the majors remained with the division (12:191).

After crossing the Tennessee, the three divisions pursued divergent routes (See campaign map at p. 6). Wilson hoped this fragmentation of his corps, all parts remaining within supporting distance of each other, would confuse the enemy as to their real objective. Such an advance would also permit more rapid movement

and provide enough forage for each division. The region was in such poor condition that had the entire corps travelled in a single column, the horses and mules might not have survived the campaign (12:192-193). Therefore, Upton travelled the east route passing by Russellville and Mount Hope, through Jasper, and on to Saunders' Ford on Mulberry Fork of the Black Warrior River. Long's division (with whom Wilson travelled) moved by way of Cherokee Station, Frankfort, and then south along Byler Road. At Upper Bear Creek he would swing east and join Upton near the Black Warrior. McCook followed Long to Upper Bear Creek where, rather than turning east, he would continue south to Eldridge. From there McCook would turn east and unite with the other two divisions (12:192-193). If Forrest interpreted these movements the way Wilson intended them to be, the Confederate general would undoubtedly anticipate Tuscaloosa as the Union objective. If Forrest were to concentrate his forces there, the Federals could out flank him and strike Selma virtually unopposed.

The columns proceeded practically unnoticed for 90 miles (3:71). On the night of March 22nd, Wilson camped at Barton Station. The following morning he and his escort moved toward Russellville where they camped for the night. Upon arriving there, Wilson found his scouts had captured 23 Confederates. Among them were a major and a captain from Roddey's command. There was also:

one 'pussy' fellow, a swashbuckler in a butter-nut coat, who called himself 'colonel', [and] looked like Sir John Falstaff. They told us he had been in Lee's army, and had come home to raise a regiment; he had been on furlough a year and over, and had not raised it yet. Forrest, enforcing a pitiless conscription, drafted him and put him in the ranks (15:628-629).

The information gleaned from the captives indicated Forrest was hard-pressed for manpower.

The divisions continued to push on as quickly as possible. Fortunately, the Spring rains that delayed the force at Gravelly Springs failed to reappear. The corps made continuous progress and Wilson arrived at Jasper at 11:30 A.M., on the 27th. At this point, Upton was well in the advance with Long and McCook to the rear (19: Pt.1, 471-475, 350-380).

At Jasper, Wilson learned from his scouts that an enemy force was moving through Bridgeville and Tuscaloosa to Selma. With this threat approaching, the race for Selma began. Wilson directed his division commanders to:

...replenish the haversacks, pack everything they must take with them on mules, leave the wagons, haul nothing but the artillery, and march with the greatest possible rapidity by way of Elyton to Montevallo (13:518-519).

That afternoon Wilson detached Brigadier General John T. Croxton with the First Brigade of McCook's division to go to Tuscaloosa and destroy everything there of military importance. Of greater importance, Wilson instructed Croxton to remain there and guard against any enemy attempt to advance on the rear of the column. Unknown then was Croxton's future encounter with William H. Jackson's Division. The delay Croxton would impose on Jackson would prove helpful to the success of the campaign (16:39).

Just south of Jasper, the rising waters of the Black Warrior caused doubt about the feasibility of crossing Mulberry Fork. The only alternate site seemed to be Saunders' Ford which Upton reached on the 27th. Arriving at the ford, Upton feared he could not make the crossing without the pontoon train. After personally examining the ford, however, Upton decided it was still passable (12:203). To make certain the crossing was safe, Upton put one of his Confederate prisoners on horseback and offered him his freedom if he would cross the fork and return. The Rebel accepted the offer and succeeded. Although the prisoner gained his freedom, Upton gained perhaps a day's time by not having to wait for the water to recede (15:631). The division waded across the fork and pushed on eight and a half miles to Locust Fork. The second appendage of the Black Warrior was crossed and on reaching its south bank Upton headed for Elyton. With the roads in better condition and only meeting slight enemy resistance, the division marched all night of the 27th passing through Elyton.

By the evening of the 28th Upton reached the north bank of the Cahaba River while Wilson and the rest of the corps were on the south bank of Locust Fork. Upton now found the ford across the Cahaba obstructed by fallen timbers making it impassable. So, Upton wheeled his division south to Hillsboro where he located a railroad bridge. Brevet Brigadier General Edward F. Winslow's brigade placed cross-ties along the rails of the quarter-mile bridge and made it safe for crossing (12:204-205).

Despite the lack of resistance, Wilson knew Forrest was up to something. Wilson respected his adversary as a resourceful and cunning opponent and knew at any moment Forrest could materialize before him. To be sure, Forrest was preparing for a Union invasion, however, the Confederate commander was at a marked disadvantage. His force of approximately 10,000 men was scattered throughout Mississippi and Alabama. Forrest knew of Union build-ups at Pensacola, Mobile, and Gravelly Springs, but he did not know the direction from which an invasion might come. Both he and Taylor, after conferring, decided Canby might by-pass Mobile and march on Selma or Montgomery. Therefore, Forrest began preparations to meet a southerly attack (12:199; 19: Pt. 2, 1148).

On March 22nd, Forrest sent word to Chalmers (whose Division was 3,648 strong) at Pickensville, Alabama, to be ready to march at a moment's notice. The following day, at Taylor's suggestion,

Forrest ordered Chalmers to move to Selma. Armstrong's Brigade followed Chalmers. Forrest then ordered Brigadier General A. Buford's Brigade, already near Selma, to move to Selma at once and construct a pontoon bridge across the Alabama River. Afterward, Buford would detach part of his Brigade to watch for any enemy movements from Pensacola or Mobile. Notwithstanding his concentration of forces toward Selma, Forrest still did not know Wilson's objective (6:12-13).

On the 24th, Taylor and Forrest reviewed Jackson's Division and Crossland's Brigade. After the review, Crossland was ordered to move to Montevallo, report to Dan Adams, and relieve Roddey so he could move south. The once scattered force now headed toward Selma (12:199).

The only Confederate unit not yet set in motion was Jackson's Division. However, on the 25th, Taylor directed Forrest to have Jackson move by way of Tuscaloosa to Selma. The following day Taylor received word that Wilson had arrived at Russellville and was moving south. In turn, Taylor notified Forrest to have Jackson's Division, "meet, whip, and get rid of" Wilson's column (19: Pt. 2, 1160).

As late as the 26th, the Union objective still eluded the Confederates. Captured Montgomery newspapers dated March 26th and 27th, revealed that Confederate attention focused on Mobile and Pensacola rather than on Wilson. They also showed Wilson's force numerically underestimated (6:14).

Forrest finally left West Point, Mississippi for Selma on March 28th. When orders from Taylor arrived instructing Forrest to move out, a problem arose. Forrest had always recruited men from the region in which he fought. This, he felt, not only gave his men a psychological advantage, it also aided their movement since they were familiar with the area. Therefore, on leaving West Point, many of the men thought they were eventually going to join General Johnston's army in North Carolina. Since Forrest's troops, for the most part, came from Mississippi and Alabama, they grew distraught. Desertion became a serious problem (6:14). Not only did the Confederate general have to worry about protecting north and central Alabama, he now had to make sure he held onto a large enough force to accomplish the task.

By this time, the bulk of Wilson's force was proceeding south from Locust Fork. Between the Black Warrior's two forks the wagon train was left under the command of Captain William E. Brown, acting chief quartermaster, and Major Archer, with a detachment of men from Major Hubbard's train guard. Without all the wagons, and with better road conditions ahead, the march grew easier and faster.

While Wilson moved toward the Cahaba, Upton set about destroying the iron works, rolling mills, and collieries south of Elyton (19:Pt.1, 472). This would be the beginning of widespread destruction to the Confederate war industry in the region.

Upton's leveling of these industries could seriously disrupt operation of Selma's arsenal, foundries, and navy yard since they were the source of materials needed to construct rams, munitions, rifles, cannons, and uniforms.

As Upton continued to inflict damage south of the Cahaba, Wilson, on the 28th, set afire the Cahaba Iron Works and a number of rolling mills and collieries at Elyton. Wilson left the small town, now the site of Birmingham, at 9:30 A.M. and skirmishing with Roddey soon began. Long's Second Brigade, led by Colonel R.B. Minty, charged the enemy detachment with sabers drawn. Roddey's rear guard was routed quickly and the Cahaba was reached at 3:00 P.M. However, Roddey awaited the Union column on the south bank of the river. As soon as the Union advance guard appeared, the Confederates opened fire. The Federals returned the fire and the fight soon fizzled. Since it was getting late and raining, Wilson decided to camp for the night on the north bank without attempting a crossing (15:632-633). While the men bivouacked, Wilson and his staff lodged at a nearby farmhouse. At the house,

one of the soldiers while halted, picked up a book lying open on the porch, and reading the title 'Les Miserables', asked the old gentlemen [who owned the house] if it was about Lee's soldiers? The old man gave him a queer smile, but did not reply (15:633).

Early on the 29th, Wilson crossed the Cahaba. Long's and McCook's divisions, however, did not complete the crossing until the next day. By the 30th, Upton was approaching Montevallo and engaging Confederate skirmishers. Four miles above the town he came upon Lyon's Brigade which had taken a strong position behind temporary breastworks atop a crescent-shaped ridge with a stream below. The ridge banks were steep and muddy and the only means of crossing the stream was a small wooden footbridge situated below the middle of the Confederate line. A thick woods provided the enemy excellent cover (6:15-16). The Fourth Division had pursued Lyon's rear guard so closely the Rebel's had no time to destroy the bridge. Upton's advance guard, holding the crossing, decided to await the arrival of the rest of the division before attacking. A short while elapsed before the attack began.

The Tenth Missouri dismounted, and stealing forward on foot from tree to tree, and crawling through the bushes in the open. When in close quarters they rose, and delivered their volley in the faces of the astonished Confederates, and at the signal, the Third Iowa charged down the main road, and over the bridge with drawn sabres (6:15-16).

Upton's men routed the Confederates who lost both weapons and equipment. Continuing on, Upton reached Montevallo by 1:00 P.M.

Since Wilson would not reach Montevallo for 24 hours, Upton again set about destroying local industry. He leveled the Red Mountain, Columbiana, and Bibb County Iron Works, the Cahaba Valley Rolling Mills and numerous collieries (11:84).

By now Forrest knew Wilson's corps was heading for Selma, but Forrest still found himself in an awkward position. Although Chalmers, Jackson, Armstrong, and Starke were on their way to Selma, they were west of the Cahaba. A plan now came to Forrest. He would mass his force north of Selma in front of the Union corps. At the same time he would have Jackson's Division follow the Federal's rear along the state road. Then, when he engaged the Union column in the front, Jackson would attack their rear and flank. This pincer maneuver was a favorite of Forrest's and held promise of success (13:524-525).

On the 31st, Forrest directed Jackson to move south from Tuscaloosa and follow Wilson from Montevallo. Subsequently, he ordered Chalmers to move directly to Ebenezer Church where Forrest would make his stand.

From Montevallo the united Union corps continued south sighting the enemy in force just outside the town. The Fourth Division concealed itself amid some woods and Upton sent out dismounted skirmishers, directing them to fall back if attacked. At 1:00 P.M., as Wilson approached the town, the enemy attacked. It was Roddey's Brigade along with Crossland's 300 Kentuckians and Dan Adams' 300 state militia. Upton, remaining in the town, watched as his skirmishers fell back. Short exchanges of fire ensued (13:524-525). By now Wilson with the Fourth Regular Cavalry had arrived. Long was closing rapidly.

Roddey, Crossland, and Adams had been sent north by Forrest to stall the advancing Union cavalry long enough to allow Chalmers, Armstrong, and Starke to reach Ebenezer Church. As the Confederates moved within a few hundred yards, Wilson grew anxious. Suddenly turning to Upton he said, "Upton, I think you have let them come far enough; move out!" (8:150).

The Fourth Division formed into column of fours. As they rode through Montevallo they broke to a trot. Once outside the city they bolted to a gallop. As Brevet Brigadier General Andrew J. Alexander's brigade charged the center of the Confederate line, Winslow's brigade enveloped the enemy's left flank. To add to the Union onslaught, Rodney's four-piece battery moved forward and with extreme accuracy pounded the Confederate line. Wilson said:

The charge was a beautiful one, and the pursuit which followed was maintained by both Alexander and Winslow till long after dark, and resulted in the capture of many prisoners, and much loose material, which the flying enemy was compelled to abandon (11:85).

The Fourth Division, acting quickly, drove the Confederates back once more without undue delay.

Scarcely had the column become stretched out along the road south of Montevallo, when a Confederate force attacked Rodney's battery which had been delayed in crossing Six Mile Creek. The Confederates came within 100 yards of the Federal battery without being noticed. There they formed into column of fours and charged with their six-shooters drawn, surprising the unsuspecting Union soldiers. Two battalions of the Fourth Iowa, to the rear of the battery, heard the commotion and charged forward. Arriving within moments, they dismounted and charged on foot. With the arrival of the Iowans, the Federals regained their poise and repelled the Rebels. Unknown to the Union troops, Forrest had personally led this attack (6:16; 13:529). He, with his escort of Colonel McCulloch's Second Missouri and a detachment of 200 from Armstrong's Brigade, had been on their way from Centerville to Ebenezer Church by way of Montevallo when they fell upon the Union battery. Having dispersed the Confederates, the Union corps camped for the night outside of Randolph.

While Union campfires burned, Forrest hurried to join and unite his forces south of Randolph. After being repelled at Six Mile Creek, Forrest countermarched and took a detour south. Travelling eight miles, he passed the sleeping Federals and reached Roddey, Crossland, and Dan Adams at Ebenezer Church around 10:00 P.M. (13:529).

Early on the morning of April 1st, Upton, still in the Union advance, moved his division through Randolph. In the process he captured a Rebel courier from Centerville attempting to reach Jackson near Montevallo. In the courier's possession were three important dispatches which Upton immediately forwarded to Wilson. The first had been sent to Jackson from Forrest on the preceeding day and read:

General -- Since the dispatch of 2 P.M. of this date, per Lieutenant Glass, the lieutenant general commanding [Forrest] directs me to say that the enemy are moving right on down the railroad with their wagontrain and artillery. He directs that you follow down after them, taking the road behind them from Montevallo. He further directs me to say that he does not wish you to bring on a general engagement, as he thinks their force is much stronger than yours; and an engagement, should be avoided unless you find the balance of our forces in supporting distance of you (19:Pt.1, 428).

The second dispatch was from Lieutenant Charles W. Anderson, aide-de-camp to Forrest. Sent from Centerville, it contained the following passage:

From reports received, and from this despatch, enemy's cavalry, or a portion of it, have crossed the Cahaba, and General Jackson will attack them at daylight. [The force was Croxton's brigade]... From this statement the battery is in rear of General Jackson, on Tuscaloosa road, and the enemy between his force and his artillery ... (19:Pt.1,173).

The third dispatch had been sent from General Jackson to Major James Hill, Sr. and read as follows:

Major -- I find the enemy encamped on Huntsville and Tuscaloosa road at White's, three miles from point where Huntsville road comes into Tuscaloosa road and six miles from this place. Their strength not yet ascertained, I am closing around them with the view of attacking, or, if they move to-night, will drive into them. I am placing a force between them and Tuscaloosa. Have also directed Colonel Cox, who is in charge of artillery and train, that in case I do not gain their front and they advance on Tuscaloosa, to fall back before them, impeding their progress; to notify Colonel Hardcastle, commanding post, to have everything in readiness to meet them; and to tear up planks on the bridge and remove them, nothing preventing. All appears bright, and I expect success (19:Pt. 1,174)

And from Trion, north of Tuscaloosa, General Croxton, on March 31st, notified Wilson that he had come upon Jackson's rear and hoped to engage him in an attempt to prevent his joining Forrest. Although Croxton barely escaped annihilation, he did delay Jackson's progress (19: Pt. 1, 420-421).

These dispatches not only revealed the position of Forrest's troops west of the Cahaba, they also revealed Forrest's intended strategy. Jackson, with Croxton imposing on his force, would counter-march and attempt to crush the Union detachment. Jackson would then resume his original line of march and follow the main Union column while Forrest joined his forces above Selma. A Confederate force apparently was closing on Wilson's corps, but with these dispatches in hand, Wilson prepared to thwart Forrest.

Wilson, reviewing both the enemy's positions and plans, saw Centerville as a strategic point. With Chalmers and Starke still west of the Cahaba, the bridge at Centerville would have to be taken. Therefore, from Randolph, Wilson detached a battalion from the First Wisconsin under Major Stephen Shipman to secure the bridge. Immediately behind Shipman, Wilson sent McCook with the balance of LaGrange's brigade. Within two hours the advance battalion covered the 15 miles to Centerville, drove back the 150-man garrison guarding the bridge, and secured the crossing for McCook who arrived soon after (12:211-213).

Once at the bridge, the Second Brigade entered Centerville and destroyed a factory, mill, and nitre works. McCook then set out for Scottsville to find Croxton, but he was unsuccessful. Rather than waste time and risk a fight with Jackson, who possessed a three-to-one advantage, McCook recrossed the Cahaba and set fire to the bridge (19:Pt.1, 428). With this crossing eliminated, the only other crossway available to Chalmers was at Marion, some 25 miles south of Centerville. Not only would this increase his marching distance, which presented numerous obstacles, but the crossing at Marion required flat boats. Using flat boats to cross the Cahaba would be time consuming and further delay his progress.

Forrest, unaware of McCook's actions, sent a message to Chalmers directing him to go as quickly as possible to Plantersville where he would join Forrest. The message reached Armstrong first. Armstrong, who could already hear fighting far to the east, sent the message on to Chalmers adding that he would not await his orders, but was proceeding immediately to Plantersville. He advised Chalmers to do the same (13:529).

Chalmers, after reading the messages, informed Forrest that afternoon that due to "obstacles in his route" (13:529) he would be unable to reach Plantersville in time. To say the least, this news disturbed Forrest. "There was nothing left him but to curse and fight, and he did both with characteristic energy and desperation" (12:216). Without Chalmers, Forrest would have to face 9,000 Union cavalymen with only 2,000 men. The plan which seemed so promising, now lay shattered. The blame had to fall somewhere and so Forrest accused Chalmers of not moving with the swiftness he had been noted for on previous occasions (13:529).

McCook now was returning to the Union column. However, rather than take the Selma Road via Randolph, he chose to return via Plantersville -- presumably to keep an eye on the enemy's movements west of the Cahaba. McCook, moving cautiously, when seven miles north of Plantersville, received an order from Wilson to return to Randolph and assist in bringing the supply train south. For this reason, McCook would not be at Ebenezer Church or Selma. In fact, only the Second Division, Fourth Division and Fourth Regular Cavalry now remained en route to Selma (19:Pt. 1, 428).

With Chalmers cut off to the west and Jackson delayed in the north, Wilson's anxiety about a flank or rear attack receded. Now, if Forest could be decisively defeated before taking up the strong fortifications at Selma, the occupation of that city would be much easier. Wilson commented:

Having thus taken care of the right flank, and anticipating Forrest in his intention to play his old game of getting upon the rear of his opponent, I gave directions to Long and Upton to allow him

no rest and push him towards Selma with the utmost spirit and rapidity (13:529).

Upton and Long by now were south of Randolph pursuing their individual routes. Since skirmishing continued throughout the morning, Wilson hoped the separate routes would at least insure a rapid advance by one of the divisions (19: Pt. 1, 358, 473). In addition, the removal of part of the column might tempt Forrest to attack either Long or Upton. If one were attacked, the other was close enough to respond quickly upon the enemy's rear and flank, thus catching Forrest at his own game.

Forrest, however, chose to lay in wait at Ebenezer Church where he set up a strong defensive position just above the apex of two converging roads. On his right flank, resting near Mulberry Creek, he placed Dan Adams' 300 state militiamen, McCulloch's Second Missouri, and two artillery pieces. To the left, resting on a high wooded area, he put Armstrong's 200-man detachment, Crossland's 300 Kentuckians, and a four piece battery. Roddery's Brigade occupied the center (13:530; 11:85; 12:215).

A four-company detachment of the Seventy-Second Indiana under Major Kilbourn, Long's advance guard, came upon enemy skirmishers at 4:00 P.M. Hearing a fight before him, Long sent forward the rest of the Indiana regiment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Chester G. Thompson. The Seventy-Second then dismounted and pushed the skirmishers back to their lines. At the same time Kilbourn was being reinforced, Long ordered four companies of the Seventeenth Indiana, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Frank White, to make a mounted saber charge. "This charge was magnificent" (6:20), managing to topple one field piece and capturing the other three momentarily. Forrest, viewing the charge, took McCulloch's Missourians and Crossland's Kentuckians and had them draw their revolvers. When the Federals approached to within 100 yards they would fire one round from their rifles, holster them, and then with revolvers in both hands fly into the charging enemy. "It was one of the most terrific hand-to-hand conflicts which occurred between cavalry soldiers during the war" (13:531).

The Confederates repelled White's Seventeenth Indiana. As White ordered his men about, Captain Taylor, of Company A, continued the charge. The slight, but gallant young soldier led his men on either unaware of White's order or just carried away with excitement. As Company A jumped an obstacle, 16 of its soldiers were shot from their saddles. Taylor, sighting a group of officers, immediately charged them. As he came within spitting distance of the officers he recognized Forrest. Singling Forrest out, Taylor walloped the Confederate commander with his saber. "He disabled his right arm, cut his head and ear with his saber, hacked his pistol barrel three or four times in the fight, until finally Forrest shot him dead" (2:218). At a meeting between Forest and Wilson a week later, under a flag of truce, Forrest said of his dead attacker, "If that boy had known

enough to give me the point of his saber instead of its edge. I should not have been here to tell you about it" (12:217).

Upton, three miles above Ebenezer Church, heard the salvos, cheers, and rifle fire of the battle below. Passing at a trot through the fallen timbers carefully placed in his way by Forrest, he soon came upon the enemy line. Quickly, without reconnoitering the enemy's position, Upton had Alexander throw forward a skirmish line to occupy the enemy until the rest of the division prepared for battle.

Drawing the fire of over a thousand muskets, which they returned with interest, they held their position, and masked the deployment of the command behind. 'Every man in it ... was either killed wounded, or had his clothes riddled with balls' (6:21).

Upton then sent Alexander, with two mounted regiments, around the enemy's right flank. Simultaneously, "Upton ordered Winslow's brigade to charge with the sabre, and led them himself" (15:635). As the Union soldiers attacked, Upton directed Captain Gilpin to "Tell Rodney for God's sake get his battery up!" (15:635). Receiving the message, Rodney moved to the top of a hill and proceeded to bombard the Rebels.

The Fourth Division took action just at the precise moment for Dan Adams' militia, along with the rest of the Confederate line, rapidly fell back. Winslow pursued the back-peddling enemy south of Ebenezer Church, but could not bring them to another stand. Moving six miles south to Plantersville, the Union column bivouacked for the night.

During the evening, Wilson made plans for attacking Selma. Wilson felt, however, he lacked sufficient information concerning the type and size of the Selma earthworks, the number of men occupying them, and the number of artillery pieces inside. And, as he said, "as no such works had ever been carried by cavalry, or for that matter by infantry either, ... it was evident that we were confronted by a mighty serious problem" (12:222).

Once again Upton provided the solution, this time in the form of an Englishman named Millington. Entering Upton's camp that evening, the civil engineer related that he had been employed by the Confederates to help construct the Selma works. Both men sat down and Millington began to sketch the fortifications.

The sketch showed that the city of about eight thousand people was surrounded by a well constructed, bastioned line of earthworks and stockades, extending in a semi-circle of about three miles, from the river bank above to the river bank below the town with an inner but incomplete line covering the principal roads from the city to the surrounding country. ...

[The earthworks were] surrounded by cultivated land well commanded and swept by thirty-two guns in position behind heavy parapets completely covered by well-constructed stockades five and a half feet high, the stakes, from six to eight inches thick, firmly planted in the ground and their tops sharpened. The sketch also showed the earthworks to be continuous except on the sections next to the river, where the line crossed short stretches of swamp or creek bottom, evidently considered impassable (12:221-222).

With this information, Wilson and Upton spent a long hour planning the attack. (See map of Selma at p. 25). Wilson placed much faith in what Upton had to say since he knew Upton had experience against similar works while serving with the infantry in the East. Ultimately, Wilson decided the attack should be a two-pronged dismounted assault with a cavalry charge right down the middle. Upton would move along the Range Line Road while Long's division, stronger than Upton's by one regiment, assaulted the north section along the Sumnerfield Road (12:222-223). Within a few hours Wilson would try to defeat Forrest and capture Selma.

Chapter Three

STORMING SELMA

After fleeing Ebenezer Church, Forrest fell back to Selma arriving there at 10:00 A.M. on April 2nd. Taylor was at Selma awaiting Forrest's arrival. Remembering Forrest as he approached to report, Taylor said:

Forrest fought as if the world depended on his arm. He appeared, horse and rider covered with blood, and announced the enemy at his heels, and that I must move at once to escape capture (13:534).

Then, seeing that he did not have enough men to fill the earthworks, Forrest pressed every man who could hold a firearm into his service telling them either "fight or swim; into the works or into the [Alabama] river" (12:232). Eventually 2,000 civilians manned the works alongside the Confederates. During the early afternoon, those who could escape left Selma. Many others chose hiding places in private homes (12:232).

In the Union camp reveille sounded just before dawn, Long's division broke camp first with Upton right behind him. All camp-followers, unnecessary paraphernalia, and animals were left behind. From Plantersville, mile upon mile passed without a single incident (12:222-223).

As the column advanced, Wilson galloped about the divisions and made last minute arrangements. Speaking to his division, brigade, and regiment commanders he reviewed the attack plan and the role each would play in the assault. Upton was the more seasoned of the two division commanders having led cavalry, artillery, and infantry forces. Long had only limited experience with cavalry (12:223-225). Nevertheless, Wilson possessed extreme confidence in both men. "While no one could foresee the certainty of success, every officer fully realized its absolute necessity and promised his best effort to insure it" (12:225).

Long's advance guard sighted Selma at approximately 3:00 P.M. Wilson then ordered Long to move west to the Summerfield Road while Upton and the Fourth Regular Cavalry continued along the Range Line Road. A mile above the works they all dismounted. Fearing that either Chalmers or Jackson might still come upon their rear, Wilson directed Long to post a rear guard. Long selected the Third Ohio to guard the division's horses and mules while watching for the enemy. The rest of the men, deployed in line of battle, concealed themselves behind a low ridge (10:430; 12:225-226).

Upton, shielding his men from the enemy behind a woods, had Winslow's brigade dismount and kept Alexander's men in the saddle. From this point the original plan called for Upton, with

300 soldiers, to charge the east portion of the works. When Upton broke through the first line and turned the enemy's right flank, Rodney would fire a single shot. That shot would be Long's signal to commence his attack (6:24; 12:226-227).

Long's division deployed rapidly. From his right to left flank he placed the Seventeenth Indiana resting near Valley Creek, the One Hundred Twenty-Third Illinois, the Ninety-Eighth Illinois, the Fourth Ohio Cavalry, and the Fourth Michigan. The latter two regiments were separated by a hill on which Robinson's Chicago Board of Trade Battery deployed. The Seventy-Second Indiana, of the First Brigade, and the Seventh Pennsylvania, of the Second Brigade, were held in reserve. In all, the line numbered approximately 1,550 men and officers (10:431; 12:226).

Waiting for darkness to fall, when the attack would begin, Long and Wilson viewed the works. They were amazed at the precision of Millington's sketches. Long was so impressed with the strength and extent of the fortifications that he doubted only one division could successfully carry the section that lay before him. He quickly presented a new plan to Wilson suggesting that Upton send out skirmishers and have the rest of the Fourth Division form to his rear. Together they could attack the works and carry with them a greater chance of success. Wilson considered the proposal, but rejected it in favor of the original plan (19: Pt. 1, 438).

In the meantime, Union skirmishers busily fired at soldiers in the breastworks while Confederate artillery sporadically fired into the Union lines. Daylight faded as the Confederates awaited the attack. Armstrong's 1,432 men defended the Confederate left flank, the section Long stood before. Regarded "as the best of Forrest's Corps" (4:50), they were so strung out that six-to-ten feet separated each man. Rodney's Brigade occupied the extreme right flank of the works and Crossland's Kentuckians accompanied by Forrest filled the second, but unfinished line.

Suddenly, at 5:00 P.M., Chalmers attacked Long's rear in an attempt to enter the city. Hearing the melee behind him, Long sent the Fourth Michigan and the Chicago Board of Trade Battery to reinforce the Third Ohio. Two factors seriously handicapped Chalmers, however. His men had just completed an exhausting ride that consumed the past 50 hours, and the Union rear guard had taken a strong defensive position offering only a narrow front. As a result, Chalmers' numerical advantage was neutralized. Moreover, the Union soldiers armed with Spencer carbines inflicted heavy casualties on Chalmers' Division and when he joined Forrest the following day he had only about 1,000 effectives (10:434-435).

Having sent reinforcements to the rear and without awaiting Rodney's signal, Long ordered his regiments forward. Personally leading his men, Long began the 600-yard approach to the foot of the works. Seeing the advance, the Confederates opened fire with

20 artillery pieces saturating the air with shot, shell, and thick clouds of smoke (12:227).

As the Second Division approached, the Confederates ceased fire to conserve ammunition and allow the smoke to clear.

A period of almost total silence ensued, as it seemed, in comparison with the previous few moments, until the Federals had almost reached the stockade, when suddenly the works fairly swarmed with grey coats, and blazed with the fire of artillery and musketry (6:25).

When fire resumed, the advancing Union line dropped to the ground and crawled forward. Reaching brush obstructions at the foot of a swamp, they were forced to their feet once again. The left flank of both the First and Second Brigades struck the swamp simultaneously. With men sinking knee deep in the marsh, delaying their movement, the assault took the appearance of an advance en echelon (10:432). Fortunately, smoke again blanketed the field and provided cover for the slowed, but still advancing units.

Upon reaching the stockade, as yet not firing a shot, Long's men took a moments rest. When composed, they moved forward again, this time wildly pumping their Spencers. Long, however, lay 150 yards behind with a serious head wound. At the pickets the men used a leap-frog maneuver to clear the obstacle and continue onward through a ditch and up over the parapet.

As when a huge sea wave rolls along the shore with gathering strength, meets an opposing crag, mounts up the steep ascent, and white with fury, sweeps resistless over the topmost crest, so the surging wave of gallant men swept over the parapet at Selma (6:260).

With Long's men moving forward, Wilson, atop his white mount "Sheridan", formed the U.S. Fourth Regulars in a single line. Advancing at a trot and then a gallop, the long blue line charged the works. Whirling sabers, high pitched screams, and the pounding of thousands of hooves warned Dan Adams of the coming collision. As Wilson approached the outer line he could hear a Confederate officer shout, "Shoot that man on the white horse" (12:229). The Confederates missed Wilson, but "Sheridan" caught a bullet in the breast, stumbled, and threw Wilson to the ground. Remounting his wounded horse, Wilson regrouped the Fourth and had them dismount. As Long's men took the Confederate left flank, Wilson charged a second time and breached the enemy's center. Once within the works on the Plantersville Road, Wilson sent word by messenger to Minty, who succeeded Long as the Second Division's commander, and Upton to press on (12:230).

Upton was on the Range Line Road when Long began his advance. Deducing that an emergency prompted Long forward

prematurely, he decided to begin his assault. With his 300 men, Upton moved through the woods and brush and then sallied across some marshy terrain. By the time Wilson's messenger reached Upton's original position, Upton was already before the works. The first men to arrive found the sharp picket stakes impossible to break or pry loose. Using the same leapfrog technique that Long's men had used, they passed the obstacle. When the 300 penetrated the works and engaged in close-quarter combat, Alexander's horsemen charged. They too, soon crossed the line and spread out in various directions. Offering only slight resistance, Rodney's men sprinted from the outer works and headed for the second line (1:47; 12:226, 228-229).

Rodney's and Robinson's batteries, seeing the fall of the outer line, moved forward. From their new positions they showered the second line with canister and shrapnel (12:230).

On the Summerfield Road inside the outer works the Fourth Regulars joined the Fourth Ohio and Seventeenth Indiana (of Long's Division) and, wheeling left, attacked the salient on that road. After seizing it, they wheeled left again and took the salient situated on the Plantersville Road. With Upton taking the enemy's right along the second line, the Confederates abandoned the works and dashed for the city (12:230-231; 6:27).

Forrest and his unit commanders tried desperately to collect and regroup their men within the city, but chaos undercut their efforts. The fight continued on the streets of Selma until Wilson and Upton entered the center of town. From the time the attack began, scarcely 25 minutes had elapsed (2:221).

Knowing the streets of Selma better than his Union counterpart helped Forrest to escape. Before leaving, however, the Confederates managed to set fire to a number of cotton warehouses, destroying 25,000 bales of cotton. Moving east, Forrest took the Burnsville Road. Colonel Israel Gannard and the Seventh Ohio pursued Forrest into the early morning hours of April 3rd. Although not catching Forrest, Gannard took many prisoners (12:231; 6:28).

Sporadic fighting continued inside Selma with the last major skirmish fought by 50 men of the Seventh Pennsylvania under Major Greeno. When Greeno took the railroad depot, the city virtually fell silent.

Wilson set up Union headquarters at the Gee House, Selma's leading hotel, and appointed Brevet Brigadier General Winslow provost marshal.

The soldiers, overpowered by weariness, wrapped in their blankets, sunk to rest about the streets; the citizens, exhausted by excitement and fear, the cries of their children hushed at last, snatching a troubled sleep; the wounded lulled by opiates into forgetfulness

of their amputated legs and arms; the dead, in their last sleep, with white faces upturned to the sky; for the passion, cruelty, bitterness, and anguish of war, this Sunday night now nearly gone, will be remembered (15:640).

One of Upton's men remembered the night saying, "Of all the nights of my experience, this is most like the horrors of war -- a captured city burning at night, a victorious army advancing and a demoralized one retreating" (16:41). Notwithstanding the impressiveness of the fall of Selma, it would be overshadowed by the capture of Richmond which also fell on April 2nd.

Nevertheless, the capture of Selma was a psychological blow to the Confederacy and it represented a severe material loss to their war effort. Located in Selma was the South's second largest arsenal covering ten acres and occupying 24 buildings (15:640). Using the Alabama River and surrounding railways, Selma's industries supplied the Confederate armies with gunpowder, rifles, carbines, revolvers, muskets, and ammunition -- "an immense array of stores for killing Yankees" (15:641). The Confederate Naval Yard, birthplace of many Confederate rams used to run the blockade at Mobile, was also occupied along with numerous iron mills, foundries, manufactories, and machine shops. With the fall of Selma on the same day as Richmond, Confederate war industries, for all practical purposes, ceased to exist.

On Tuesday, April 4th, Winslow set fire to all those places vital to the Confederate war effort. Before starting the fires, all the shot, shell, ammunition, machinery, and stores that could be found were dumped into the Alabama. Then, as a heavy rainstorm drenched the city, the buildings were lit. These places, being of dry pine, instantaneously went up in flames. When the fires died two days later, the following had been destroyed: the Selma Arsenal, Confederate Government Naval Foundry, the Selma Iron Works, Shovel Factory, Pierces Foundry, Nitre Works, Washington Works, Tennessee Iron Works, Phelan and McBride's Machine Shop, the Horse Shoe Manufactory, and the Powder Mills and Magazine. Also destroyed were the surrounding railroad depots (7:416-417; 19:Pt. 1, 393).

With Forrest beaten and Selma destroyed, the Selma Campaign, for all practical purposes, was all but over. Wilson remained in Selma for eight days and on April 10th, he departed for Montgomery. Unbeknownst to Wilson at the time, Robert E. Lee had surrendered to Grant at Appomatox, Virginia the preceding day. In fact, Wilson captured Montgomery, Alabama and Columbus, Georgia before learning the war might be over. From Columbus, Wilson moved to Macon, Georgia. As he approached Macon on April 20th, Wilson received a message forwarded to him by Confederate Brigadier General Robertson. The message read:

Inform General [Wilson] commanding enemy's forces in

your front that a truce for the purpose of a final settlement was agreed upon yesterday between Generals Johnston and Sherman, applicable to all forces under their commands. A message to that effect from General Sherman will be sent him as soon as practicable. The contending forces are to occupy their present position, forty-eight hours notice being given on the event of resumption of hostilities (19: Pt. 1, 365-366).

Not having received official notification of the truce from Sherman, Wilson continued on and occupied Macon, placing the city under military rule. Wilson then wired Sherman for clarification. At 6:00 P.M., April 21st, Wilson received word from Sherman to suspend hostilities. The war was over. Wilson's corps had not only defeated Forrest and destroyed a significant portion of the Confederate industrial infrastructure before the end, but they had also pocketed Selma, Montgomery, Columbus, and Macon.

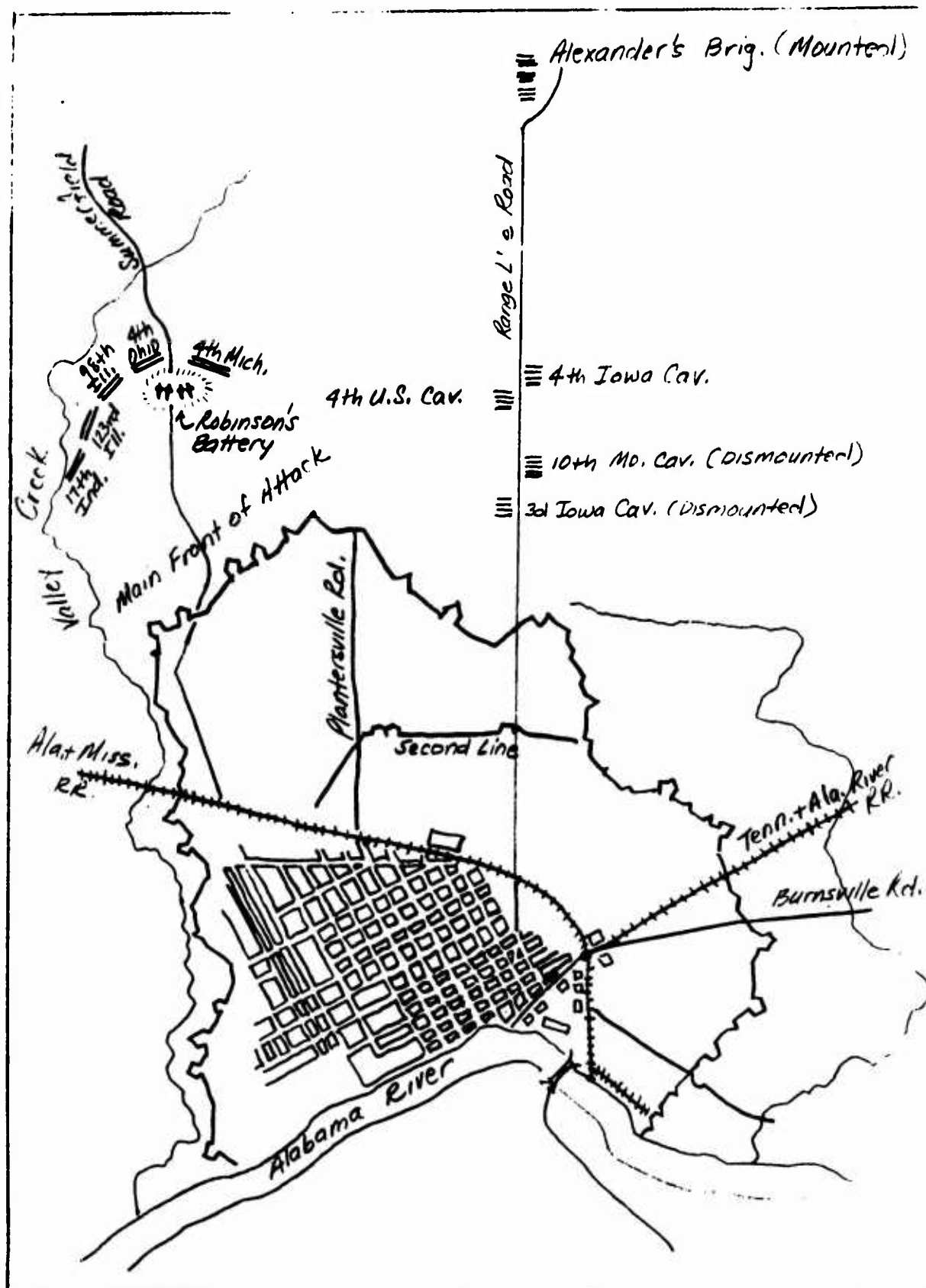


FIGURE 2: SELMA FORTIFICATIONS

Adapted from the Civil War Times Illustrated, Vol. 9, (January, 1963): p. 40.

Chapter Four

THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR

If the principles of war "represent generally accepted major truths which have been proven successful in the art and science of conducting war," (18:2-4) then one could reasonably expect the Selma Campaign would reveal examples of the (now) 12 principles. What follows is a principle-by-principle study of the Selma Campaign, focusing on the most significant of the campaign's examples of each principle. Inasmuch as the principles hereafter are cited by title alone, you should reference Air Force Manual 1-1, Chapter 2, for definitions of the principles if clarification is necessary. In any event, you should find the definition of each principle becomes readily apparent from the examples selected to portray that principle. Finally, the examples for each principle are grouped under the sub-headings of "Union" and "Confederate," with the Union examples preceding the Confederate examples.

OBJECTIVE

Union

As part of the overall Union objective to defeat the Confederacy via an offensive military strategy that destroyed the South's armies and will to fight, the Selma Campaign had three objectives. First, with Thomas remaining in Tennessee to hold off Hood, Wilson's move south through Alabama would preoccupy Taylor and Forrest, thereby helping to insure a Confederate force would not attack Sherman's rear as he marched north toward Virginia. Second, Wilson's operation would help divert Confederate attention from Canby's move against Mobile, an important Confederate port. Finally, the Union corps intended to capture Selma and in doing so destroy an important portion of the South's industrial infrastructure, such as it was, that supported the Confederate war effort. The capture of Selma would also close down the Confederacy's major depot in the southwest.

Confederate

Inasmuch as the Confederates were on the defensive, Forrest's objective was to defend Alabama and Mississippi against the Union invasion. For Forrest to achieve his objective, he would have had to repel Wilson short of Selma and force a Union retreat to Tennessee.

DEFENSIVE

Union

From March 22, 1865, through April 2, 1865, when Forrest fled Selma, the Union assumed and sustained the offensive. Advancing relatively rapidly south, Wilson forced Forrest to rely on defensive actions at Elyton, Montevallo, and Ebenezer Church in an effort to win time in which to consolidate his forces. At each engagement the Union sustained the offensive by attacking in strength and out maneuvering the Confederates. The storming of Selma was the capstone of the Union offensive thrust into Alabama.

Confederate

Notwithstanding the facts that the Confederacy overall was on the defensive and Wilson's invasion forced Forrest to adopt a defensive strategy, Forrest devised a plan that, if successful, may have allowed him to seize the offensive. It is impossible to predict what the outcome of battle at Ebenezer Church might have been had Chalmers arrived on time and Jackson succeeded in striking Wilson's rear. Nevertheless, had Forrest's plan succeeded, he either would have pursued Wilson north to Tennessee or gone south to fight Canby at Mobile.

SURPRISE

Union

Interestingly, Wilson used security and maneuver to produce uncertainty about his objective and the size of his force. The secrecy he enforced during his corps' preparations at Gravelly Springs (e.g. denying press cover of the corps' review before embarking south) gave the Confederates no accurate idea of how large Wilson's corps would be. Moreover, as Wilson moved south, he divided his corps into three parts and had each part follow a different route to Jasper, Alabama. Not only did this allow more rapid movement, but McCook's route to the west appeared to be carrying him to Tuscaloosa by way of Eldridge. Indeed, the Montgomery newspapers of March 26 and 27, 1865, indicate that the Union corps' strength was underestimated and that Confederate attention was not directed toward Selma. Not until March 28th did Forrest leave for Selma. By that time Upton was south of the Cahaba River and on the way to Montevallo, about 40 miles east of Tuscaloosa. Wilson's use of security and maneuver apparently caused Taylor and Forrest enough uncertainty to delay their identifying the real Union objective and the consolidation of their forces above Selma. Had Forrest made his decision a day earlier to unite his forces at Ebenezer Church, the outcome of the Union campaign may have been different.

Confederate

Forrest's overall strategy hinged on surprise and maneuver. Provided Chalmers had joined Forrest at Ebenezer Church to strengthen the Confederate line, Jackson's expected surprise attacks on Wilson's rear and flank may have yielded Forrest a victory. None of this came to pass, however.

Despite the failure of Forrest's grand surprise plan, the Confederates did surprise the Union column on two occasions. As Forrest moved toward Ebenezer Church, he came upon Rodney's battery just south of Montevallo. After moving within 100 yards of the battery without being noticed, Forrest attacked with only 200 men. The quick response of the Fourth Iowa repelled Forrest's attack and begs the question whether Forrest realized the size and composition of the Union force he engaged.

The other Confederate surprise attack occurred just outside of Selma when Chalmers came upon Long's rear guard while trying to gain entrance to the city. Long reinforced his rear guard and Chalmers was held at bay. The only consequence of Chalmers' surprise attack was Long commenced his assault on Selma sooner than expected.

In general, the two Confederate surprise attacks were haphazard with no apparent aim other than to disrupt the enemy's action. In both cases, the surprises accomplished nothing more than that.

SECURITY

Union

It should be remembered that the deployment of Wilson's corps and its campaign into Alabama were in themselves part of Union security measures to protect Sherman's rear and to divert Confederate attention from Canby's move on Mobile. Nevertheless, beginning with his corps' deployment at Gravelly Springs through the capture of Selma, Wilson had to insure the security of his force. The following examples of Wilson's security measures are only the most significant and have not been alluded to under other principles discussed.

Wilson undertook a subtle, but interesting security measure in early February 1865, when he deliberately picked one of his most observant officers to meet with Forrest to discuss the supplying of Union prisoners. Wilson instructed that officer to gather information about the condition of the surrounding country, its food supply, and to estimate Forrest's state of mind. Albeit difficult to assess the value to Wilson of the information gleaned from that meeting, it appears Wilson intended to gain information that would help him counter threats posed by the Confederates.

Another security measure taken by Wilson before leaving Gravelly Springs was to send Hatch's division to Eastport, Mississippi. At Eastport, Hatch guarded the Tennessee River for enemy movements that might threaten the Union force. In addition, Hatch could monitor the Memphis and Charleston and the Mobile and Ohio Railroads that could be used to move Confederate troops into northern Alabama or south to Meridian, Mississippi.

After Wilson moved south into Alabama, his corps pursued three routes that converged at Jasper, Alabama. At Jasper, Wilson learned from his scouts that Confederate troops were moving through Bridgeville and Tuscaloosa toward Selma. Seeing that those movements threatened his right flank and rear, Wilson sent Brigadier General John T. Croxton to Tuscaloosa to destroy places of military value and to protect the corps against a Confederate threat. It would be Croxton, while deployed at Tuscaloosa, who encountered Jackson. The delay caused Jackson by Croxton helped prevent Jackson from carrying out a surprise rear and flank attack on the Union corps at Ebenezer Church.

From Jasper the Union corps continued south. On April 1, 1865, Upton's division moved through Randolph. Near Randolph, Upton captured a Confederate courier who had three dispatches revealing the position of Confederate forces and Forrest's plan for defeating Wilson. From these dispatches Wilson learned that Jackson, Chalmers, and Starke were west of the Cahaba River and would have to cross it to reach Selma. Their likely crossing would be at Centerville. So Wilson sent McCook to Centerville to destroy the bridge there. Afterward, McCook returned via Plantersville to protect the corps' right flank. There is no doubt that the destruction of the Centerville bridge delayed the consolidation of Forrest's forces and also served to protect Wilson's corps.

Confederate

Unfortunately, the Selma Campaign offers few examples of successful Confederate security measures. One of Forrest's security initiatives, however, occurred in January 1865, when he sent Roddey's Brigade east from Corinth, Mississippi to guard the Tennessee River and to watch for any Union movement from Gravelly Springs. But Roddey's reconnaissance mission was cut short when Colonel William Palmer attacked him by surprise and defeated him.

Ironically, Forrest's major security resource lay in his scattered forces. Because Forrest's units were spread over Alabama and Mississippi, Wilson found it hard to estimate accurately the Confederate strength. Wilson's wonderment about Forrest's strength, in turn, may have prompted Wilson to be as security conscious as he appeared to be.

Certainly, Forrest's security measure failures outnumbered his successes. Among those failures were: the Union capture of Forrest's courier with dispatches revealing his unit locations

and his plan to defeat Wilson; the capture of Millington, the English engineer, who drew accurate sketches of the Selma fortifications and gun emplacements; and the capture of Montgomery newspapers which gave Wilson Confederate estimates of his force strength and revealed Confederate preoccupation with Union activities at Mobile and Pensacola.

MASS

Union

The Union regard for mass became apparent during preparations for the campaign. Grant's original plan called for a cavalry force of 5,000 to move into Alabama. However, at a meeting with Grant on February 23, 1865, Thomas and Wilson urged Grant to permit Wilson to move south with his entire corps which eventually numbered 13,500. This larger force, Thomas and Wilson suggested, would insure the defeat of Forrest. Indeed, Wilson's numerical superiority permitted him to execute important security deployments while still retaining large numbers in his main column. From a tactical perspective, therefore, the Union corps could use mass on several occasions, of which the battles at Montevallo and Selma are but two examples.

On March 30, 1865, Upton's division approached Montevallo and came upon Lyon's Brigade which had taken a strong defensive position along a ridge covered by woods. In front of the ridge was a steep, muddy bank, a stream, and a footbridge. Upton's advance guard engaged Lyon's skirmishers and pushed them back so quickly that the skirmishers failed to destroy the bridge after crossing it. Upton's advance guard pursued the Confederates and held the bridge until the remainder of the division arrived. Shortly thereafter, Upton had the Tenth Missouri dismount and steal forward under cover of trees and brush toward Lyon's line. When they arrived before the Confederates, they rose and fired at close quarters. At that moment, Upton sent the mounted Third Iowa charging down the road, across the bridge, and up the bank into the Confederate line. Upton's concentration of force (mass) upon the Confederate line, combined with surprise and shock (the cavalry charge), broke the Confederate defensive position and forced them to retreat.

Again at Selma the Union demonstrated the use of mass. Although Upton attacked the Confederate right flank and Wilson the center, they did so with small forces intending to keep the Confederates in those portions of the fortifications preoccupied. It was Long's division before the Confederate left flank, however, that represented the main Union attack. In all, Long attacked with about 1,550 men. Armstrong, who held the fortifications in Long's front, had about 1,430 men. However, Armstrong's men were spread thin along the extensive fortifications giving Long the advantage of concentrated force (mass) at their point of attack. Thus, the Union used mass to breach the confederate left flank.

Confederate

Mass is generally regarded as a principle applied in conjunction with offensive action. Since Forrest pursued a defensive strategy, he more appropriately relied on other principles such as maneuver and surprise. Nevertheless, from a defensive perspective, Forrest did try to mass his forces at Ebenezer Church to make as strong a stand as possible. In this defensive context alone, Forrest attempted to use mass.

ECONOMY OF FORCE

Union

The most significant examples of Wilson's application of this principle involve his deployment of security forces. When, sending Hatch to Eastport, Croxton to Tuscaloosa, and McCook to Centerville, Wilson had to make two economy of force judgements. First, he had to ensure that after deploying those forces his column remained strong enough to achieve their primary objectives. Second, Wilson had to deploy security forces that were strong enough to accomplish their tasks. Only in retrospect, after Wilson had defeated Forrest and captured Selma, could it be said that Wilson applied well the principle of economy of force.

Confederate

Once more, the defensive Confederate strategy diminished the importance of economy of force. Rather than economy, Forrest's major concerns were mustering and preserving his force. For example, early in 1865, prior to Wilson leaving Gravelly Springs, Forrest resorted to a widespread conscription about Mississippi and Alabama to bolster his depleted ranks. Later, when Forrest left Mississippi for Alabama in March, 1865, he was confronted by desertions. Many of his men deserted because they thought they were on their way to North Carolina to join Johnston and they did not want to leave their home region. Finally, when Forrest arrived at Selma, he impressed 2,000 civilians to help man the fortifications in defense of the city. Therefore, instead of measuring whether he had committed excessive force to secondary objectives or sufficient force to carry primary objectives, Forrest mainly had to worry about sustaining a force capable of stopping Wilson.

MANEUVER

Union

Among other examples, the actions of Upton's Fourth Division on leaving Montevallo and on arriving at Ebenezer Church

demonstrated the successful application of this principle. On March 31, 1865, Upton left Montevallo and encountered the enemy just south of the town. As his skirmishers fell back under Confederate attack, Upton had Alexander's mounted brigade charge the Confederate center. At the same time, Upton sent Winslow's mounted brigade around the enemy's left flank. The shock of the cavalry charge to their center in concert with the speed of the Union's envelopment around their flank, forced the Confederate line to break and retreat.

The following day Upton used the very same maneuvers in helping defeat Forrest at Ebenezer Church. Long's division, travelling ahead and to the west of Upton, engaged Forrest's line first. Hearing the battle before him, Upton rushed south. Arriving at the Confederate line, Upton had Winslow's mounted brigade charge the enemy. Upton simultaneously sent two mounted regiments under Alexander's command around the enemy's right flank. As at Montevallo, Upton's use of maneuver caused the Confederate line to crumble and retreat.

Confederate

Along with surprise, Forrest's defensive strategy hinged on maneuver. On March 22, 1865, Forrest launched his plan by ordering Chalmers and Wirt Adams from Pickensville, Alabama to Selma. Buford, already near Selma, was ordered there to build a pontoon bridge across the Alabama River; obviously needed for a Confederate retreat if that contingency arose. Forrest then set Jackson in motion having him go to Tuscaloosa. From Tuscaloosa, Jackson ultimately had to gain and attack the Union column's rear as Forrest met the Union front head-on. Clearly, Forrest's maneuver of his forces in relation to Wilson constituted his plan's linchpin.

One other aspect of Confederate defensive maneuver must be addressed and that concerns Forrest's use of skirmishers. Inasmuch as Forrest needed time to consolidate his forces above Selma, his use of skirmishers for that purpose was prudent. By harrassing the Union forces, Forrest hoped to delay their progress and inflict as many casualties as possible. Notwithstanding the fact that his skirmishers fell short on both tasks, Forrest's extensive use of Roddey's, Lyons', Crossland's, and Dan Adams' units as skirmishers at Elyton and Montevallo demonstrate Forrest's deliberate use of skirmishers in defensive maneuver.

TIMING AND TEMPO

Union

The Union advance from Gravelly Springs to Selma was continuous and relentless. As mounted infantry, Wilson's corps covered ground rapidly on horseback and could dismount to fight

as infantry. During the 11-day campaign, Wilson's corps covered 250 miles and engaged the enemy six times. Moreover, the Union corps had to cross the Tennessee River, both forks of the Black Warrior River, and the Cahaba River before reaching Selma. Although Forrest chose the battlefield, Wilson's rapid advance, the Confederate uncertainty of his objective, and Wilson's pressing the offensive when engaging the enemy all contributed to Wilson's dictating the timing and tempo of battle.

Confederate

Here again, timing and tempo are regarded as offensive principles, therefore, Forrest had little opportunity to rely on them. From a defensive perspective, however, Forrest tried to use timing by having his forces consolidate at Ebenezer Church before the Union arrived. Moreover, Jackson's planned surprise rear attack would have been an excellent example of Confederate timing. Unfortunately for Forrest, neither of these efforts succeeded. As a result, the Selma Campaign is devoid of Confederate execution of timing and tempo.

UNITY OF COMMAND

Union and Confederate

Both sides clearly exercised unity of command. For the Union, Grant authorized Wilson to act as an independent commander. This freed Wilson and his corps from Thomas, whose responsibility was the defense of Tennessee. For the Confederates, Taylor's promotion of Forrest to lieutenant general and appointment of him as commander of the Cavalry District of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana, gave Forrest overall control of the cavalry forces in that region.

SIMPLICITY

Union

Simplicity characterized Wilson's guidance to his subordinate commanders, particularly prior to the Battle of Selma. The evening before the battle, Wilson met with Upton and Long to develop their plan of attack. After discussion, Wilson decided on a three-pronged attack of the city with Long leading the main attack force against the Confederate left flank. Upton's attack upon the enemy's right flank would be signalled by an artillery volley by Rodney's battery. In the middle, Wilson would lead a cavalry charge against the Confederate center. The next day, as the Union column approached Selma, Wilson rode about to discuss the attack plan with his division, brigade, and regiment leaders to make sure all understood the plan.

The acid test of the plan of attack came when Chalmers surprised Long's rear and disturbed the coordination of the Union attack. The simplicity of the plan and its understanding by all unit leaders helped insure its success despite the confusion created by Chalmers. Particularly Long, Minty who succeeded Long, and Upton executed their tasks in very good fashion, notwithstanding the precipitous way in which the battle began.

Confederate

Forrest's defensive strategy exuded simplicity and his subordinate commanders apparently understood the plan and worked hard to execute it. Essentially, Forrest planned to harass the Union column to slow their progress and in the interim consolidate his forces north of Selma for a strong defensive stand. (Perhaps for the same reasons Lee chose to fight at Cold Harbor rather than take up the fortifications at Richmond, Forrest chose to fight at Ebenezer Church just north of Selma). Forrest's plan was indeed simple and brilliant considering Confederate circumstances. The weight of other factors, not the least of which was superior generalship by Wilson, undermined Forrest's plan.

LOGISTICS

Union

From the outset of the campaign Wilson worked to insure an adequate, but unencumbering logistics system. Planning on a campaign that would not exceed 60 days or follow rail lines, he had each man carry as much munitions (100 pounds) and staple (five days light rations) as he could. Wilson also used pack mules to carry additional supplies and planned on foraging to supplement his supply needs. In all, Wilson's logistics plans reduced his reliance on a huge supply wagon train that would unnecessarily slow his advance.

Confederate

From all accounts, it appears Forrest relied almost entirely on foraging to sustain his forces. Fighting on their home ground, Forrest could expect support from the indigenous population. Of course, as his force approached Selma, he could rely on supplies warehoused in the city. Since Forrest's forces were not weighed down by supply trains, they could move cross country easily. More than supplies, however, Forrest had to worry about having enough men at the right place, at the right time.

COHESION

Union

The cohesion of Wilson's force appears to have been very high. Their extensive training while in cantonments at Gravelly Springs, the competence of their combat-seasoned leaders, their being well supplied, and the fact that the war was favorably drawing to a close, all seemed to instill a strong warfighting spirit in the Union troops. Moreover, Union regiments were manned by troops from the same geographic area and this undoubtedly enhanced their esprit.

Confederate

It is hard to assess the cohesion of Forrest's forces. Battle weary and their cause doomed, they nonetheless managed to fight on. Perhaps that accomplishment alone, in large part, can be attributed to the reputation and fighting spirit of Forrest. At the very least, Forrest's men fought on to defend their homeland.

Chapter Five

GUIDED DISCUSSION LESSON PLAN

NOTES TO CHAIRMAN

The Selma Campaign began late in March 1865, only 18 days before Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox, Virginia. Coming so late in the war, the value of the Selma Campaign to the Union's war effort is, at best, questionable. Nevertheless, the Selma Campaign provides the Civil War student with two opportunities. First, a study of this campaign delves into a portion of Civil War military history often neglected or glossed over in major Civil War historical works. Second, the Selma Campaign offers many examples of the application and omission of the principles of war. This lesson, therefore, allows you to review the military events of the Selma Campaign and analyze the conduct of the campaign using the principles of war (as contained in AFM 1-1).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Lead-Off Question

Despite the fact the war was in its final weeks and the outcome all but decided, what were Wilson's objectives in conducting the Selma Campaign? Was he successful in achieving those objectives?

Discussion

Wilson began the campaign with three objectives in mind, although the relative priority of each objective is not readily apparent. To begin, Wilson headed south into Alabama to cut off Confederate forces that might attempt to join Johnston in North Carolina and threaten Sherman's advance into Virginia. In this regard, it must be remembered that Wilson's operation was conducted in concert with Thomas who remained in Tennessee to guard against a possible invasion by Hood. The second of Wilson's objectives was to divert Confederate attention from the Union initiative against Mobile, a major Confederate port. Had Wilson not moved into Alabama, Forrest could have taken his forces south to engage Canby in defense of Mobile. Finally, Wilson wanted to destroy the Confederate war sustaining capabilities. As a major Confederate industrial center and depot, Selma's capture might seriously cripple the Confederate ability to sustain its forces. Moreover, the capture of Selma had the psychological potential for undermining the Confederate will to fight.

With regard to Wilson's first two objectives, it's safe to say he was decidedly successful. Because of Wilson's action,

Forrest was neither able to join Johnston to fight Sherman, nor head south to help defend Mobile. Concerning Wilson's third objective, he indeed succeeded in severely damaging Confederate war industries in Alabama. Unfortunately, the war ended too soon after the fall of Selma to judge whether the damage done by Wilson would have had a significant impact on the South's war fighting capabilities.

Follow-Up Question

What was Forrest's objective during the Selma Campaign and how may he have been better able to achieve that objective?

Discussion

Consistent with the South's defensive strategy, Forrest's objective was the defense of his military department which covered Alabama, Mississippi, and eastern Louisiana. Familiar with the terrain, fighting on home ground, and taking up strong defensive positions ostensibly could give Forrest a tactical and moral leg up on Wilson. In fact, when all the troops available to Forrest are tallied, Forrest had a number (about 10,000) comparable to Wilson's force. Nonetheless, Forrest faced significant obstacles (discussed in response to Question 3, Follow-up) to achieving his objective. Ultimately, the cumulative effect of those obstacles contributed to Forrest's failure to achieve his objective.

On the other hand, could Forrest have achieved his objective by executing a different strategy or employing different tactics? The answer to this question rests solely on conjecture. But a discussion of this question should prompt students to think creatively of how they would have acted if they were Forrest. If the response to this question lags, ask the seminar if Forrest should have surprised Wilson at Gravelly Springs? Or, should Forrest have had Chalmers and Jackson attack Wilson's right flank south of Ebenezer Church while Forrest and the remainder of his force attacked Wilson's left flank (using a double flank attack in lieu of taking Wilson head-on)?

2. Lead-Off Question

In your opinion, based on the events of the Selma Campaign, what principles of war did Wilson apply most effectively?

Discussion

The Selma Campaign provides examples of Union application of each of the principles of war, but a subjective evaluation of the history of the campaign indicates Wilson most effectively applied objective, offensive, surprise, security, mass, economy of force,

maneuver, timing and tempo, and logistics. For examples of the application of those nine and the remaining three principles, reference Chapter Four.

Follow-Up Question

In comparison to Wilson, what principles of war did Forrest apply most effectively?

Discussion

Forrest assumed a defensive strategy virtually ruling out the immediate application of principles like offensive and timing and tempo. Regarding the remaining principles, it can be argued that Forrest applied none of them effectively inasmuch as his strategy and tactics failed to achieve the objective. That should not diminish, however, the recognition that Forrest attempted to apply surprise, maneuver, and mass. Forrest's efforts to apply those three principles, along with examples of his efforts to apply the other principles of war, are discussed in Chapter Four.

3. Lead-Off Question

In planning the prosecution of the Selma Campaign, what would you say were the foremost obstacles confronting Wilson?

Discussion

Wilson had to negotiate many obstacles in prosecuting the Selma Campaign, but four concerns must have weighed heavily on his mind. First, Wilson did not have an accurate estimate of Forrest's troop strength, the location of Confederate units, or Forrest's plan of battle. Only the capture of a Confederate courier carrying important dispatches helped give Wilson a good feel for the deployment of Forrest's units and his overall defensive plan. Second, Wilson's corps had to traverse rugged terrain including several river and stream crossings. Not only could these crossings slow his progress, but they created vulnerable junctures the enemy could exploit. Third, the Union corps' route would not follow rail lines and Wilson had to ensure his force was adequately supplied as they ventured deep into enemy territory. Having his troops carry large amounts of ammunition and staple helped minimize supply train drag and improve their mobility. Finally, Wilson faced very strong fortifications as he planned the attack on Selma. Previous combat experience demonstrated the difficulty of carrying such fortifications by frontal assault. To be sure, this obstacle was significantly reduced by obtaining Millington's sketches of the Selma fortifications including the location of gun emplacements. Whether you choose to credit luck, good planning, or a

combination of both, Wilson succeeded in negotiating these four obstacles.

Follow-Up Question

From the Confederate perspective, what were some of the most significant obstacles confronting Forrest in executing the defense of Alabama and Mississippi?

Discussion

Above all, manpower had to be Forrest's major obstacle and concern. His forces were weary from earlier battles and his core of experienced troops depleted. This forced Forrest to resort to a widespread conscription of men who were of questionable fighting ability. The morale of Forrest's troops must also be questioned in that desertion became a problem as Forrest began moving his forces east toward Selma. In addition, all his divisions and brigades were scattered about Alabama and Mississippi making it difficult to concentrate his forces rapidly. Forrest's second obstacle was his uncertainty of the Union objective and this only exacerbated his manpower problems. In other words, Forrest did not know early on where Wilson was headed and this made choosing a location at which to coalesce his scattered forces all the more difficult. Finally, as with Wilson, a sizeable portion of Forrest's forces had to traverse rugged terrain. The late recognition by Forrest of Wilson's objective only served to amplify the criticality of rapid Confederate troop movements across rugged terrain. The failure of Forrest's forces to maneuver successfully, in large part, contributed to Forrest's failure to defend Alabama.

APPENDIX*

* See note at bottom of p.43.

THE OPPOSING FORCES

Cavalry Corps, Military Department of the Mississippi

Commander - Bvt. Major General James H. Wilson

Escort - Fourth U.S. Cavalry - Lt. William O'Connell

First Division - Brigadier General Edward M. McCook

Artillery - Indiana Light, 18th Battery - Captain Moses M. Beck

First Brigade - Brigadier General John T. Croxton

Regiments:

8th Iowa - Colonel Joseph B. Dorr

4th Kentucky - Mounted Infantry - Colonel Robert M. Kelly

6th Kentucky - Major William H. Fidler (captured April 6),
Captain Edmund Penn

2nd Michigan - Lt. Colonel Thomas W. Johnston

Second Brigade - Colonel Oscar H. LaGrange

Regiments:

2nd Indiana (Battalion) - Captain R.S. Hill (wounded April 2
and 16) - Captain J.B. Williams

4th Indiana - Lt. Colonel Horace P. Lamson

4th Kentucky - Colonel Wickliffe Cooper

7th Kentucky - Lt. Colonel William W. Bradley (wounded April
12) - Major A.S. Bloom

1st Wisconsin - Lt. Colonel Henry Hanlon (wounded April 16)

Second Division - Brigadier General Eli Long (wounded
April 2) - Colonel R.H.G. Minty

Artillery - Illinois Light, Chicago Board of Trade Battery -
Captain George I. Robinson

First Brigade - Colonel Abram O. Miller (wounded April 2) -
Colonel Jacob G. Vail - Lt. Colonel Frank White

Regiments:

98th Illinois - Lt. Colonel Edward Kitchell
123rd Illinois - Lt. Colonel J. Biggs (wounded April 2) -
Captain Owen Wiley
17th Indiana - Colonel Jacob G. Vail, Lt. Colonel Frank
White, Major John J. Weiler
72nd Indiana - Lt. Colonel Chester G. Thompson

Second Brigade - Colonel R.B. Minty - Lt. Colonel Horace M.
Howland

Regiments:

4th Michigan - Lt. Colonel Benjamin D. Pritchard
3rd Ohio - Lt. Colonel Horace N. Howland - Major D.E.
Livermore
4th Ohio - Lt. Colonel George W. Dobbs (killed April 2) -
Captain William W. Shoemaker
7th Pennsylvania - Colonel Charles C. McCormick (wounded
April 2) - Lt. Colonel James F. Andress

Fourth Division - Bvt. Major General Emory Upton

Artillery - Fourth U.S., Battery I, Lt. George B. Rodney

First Brigade - Bvt. Brigadier General Edward F. Winslow

Regiments:

3rd Iowa - Colonel John W. Noble
4th Iowa - Lt. Colonel John H. Peters
10th Missouri - Lt. Colonel Frederick W. Benteen

Second Brigade - Bvt. Brigadier General Andrew J. Alexander

Regiments:

5th Iowa - Colonel J. Morris Young
1st Ohio - Colonel Berth B. Eggleston
7th Ohio - Colonel Israel Garrard

**Cavalry Corps, Department of Alabama, Mississippi and
East Louisiana**

Commander - Lieutenant General Nathan Bedford Forrest
Escort - Colonel Robert McCulloch's Second Missouri
Brigade

Chalmers' Division - Brigadier General James R. Chalmers

Brigadier General Frank C. Armstrong's Mississippi
Brigade
Brigadier General Wirt Adams' Mississippi Brigade
Brigadier General Peter B. Stanke's Mississippi Brigade

Jackson's Division - Brigadier General William H. Jackson

Colonel Tyree H. Bell's Tennessee Brigade
Colonel Edward W. Rucker's Tennessee Brigade
General L. S. Ross' Texans

Buford's Brigade - Brigadier General A. Buford

Roddey's Brigade - Brigadier General Philip D. Roddey

Crossland's Brigade - Colonel Edward Crossland

Additional Forces - State Militias under,

Major General Howell Cobb
Major General G.W. Smith
Brigadier General Felix H. Robertson
Brigadier General Daniel W. Adams
Brigadier General R.C. Tyler

Note: This Appendix is a compilation of unit citations extracted from sources cited within this text.

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