UNC

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

(1)

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY	3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE	
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) AD-A283 708
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT 6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) C	7a. [illegible]
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) NAVAL WAR COLLEGE NEWPORT, R.I. 02841	7b. [illegible]
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION 8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS PROGRAM ELEMENT NO. / PROJECT NO. / TASK NO / WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.

11. TITLE (Include Security Classification)
Sherman's 1864-65 Campaigns: Strategic Analysis and Lessons for Today (U)

12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S)
Mr. Michael J. Hughes

13a. TYPE OF REPORT	13b. TIME COVERED	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day)	15. PAGE COUNT
FINAL	FROM _____ TO _____	94/05/16	33

16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

17. COSATI CODES		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP

18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)
a Civil War, campaign planning, operational art, secondary theater

19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)
(~~See attachment~~--other side of form)

20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT XXX UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED ☐ SAME AS RPT. ☐ DTIC USERS	21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL CHAIRMAN, OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) 841-3414 / 22c. OFFICE SYMBOL C

DD FORM 1473, 84 MAR 83 APR edition may be used until exhausted. All other editions are obsolete

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

★ U.S. Government Printing Office 1988-633-018

19. ABSTRACT (Cont'd):

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

SHERMAN'S 1864-65 CAMPAIGNS: STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS FOR TODAY

by

Michael J. Hughes

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: Michael J. Hughes

16 May 1994

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: SHERMAN TAKES COMMAND

When Major General William T. Sherman assumed command of Union forces in the Western theater of war[1] in March 1864, no US military officer in history with the exception of his predecessor, U.S. Grant, had ever been responsible for such an enormous region. Constant enemy harassment of Union supply lines and the barrier of the Appalachian Mountains posed serious logistical and geographic obstacles to achieving strategically-significant victories in the theater. The new theater commander, moreover, had been called "crazy" by Northern newspapers barely two years before for suggesting that a huge invading army would be required to restore Federal authority in the rebellious states. When his view of the war had been publicly ridiculed, he had lapsed into a mental depression.

Over the next twelve months, however, this untested theater commander would take an army through a thousand miles of enemy territory in three campaigns, winding up in Robert E. Lee's strategic rear area. To get there, his soldiers would cut a thirty to sixty mile swath through the heart of the old states of the Confederacy, destroying railroads, factories, supplies, and the pride and confidence of the Southern people. Rarely in history has a commander

in a secondary theater of war produced such major results or influenced so directly the outcome of a war.

This paper analyzes the strategy, planning, and execution of Sherman's 1864-65 campaigns and their contributions to the Union's victory. The purpose is to gain some insights into the campaigns of one of the founders of the operational art in the industrial age. The paper begins with brief overviews of each of the campaigns Sherman conducted as a theater commander: the Atlanta campaign, the march through Georgia to the sea, and the march through the Carolinas. It then discusses how Sherman integrated his view of the nature of the war and Union grand strategy into a coherent series of theater campaign plans. The paper concludes with a discussion of some of the ingredients of Sherman's success that are still relevant for campaign planners today. The focus of the paper is not on the historical details of the campaigns nor their tactical actions. Rather, it is on how Sherman combined his strategic vision with innovative concepts of logistics and maneuver warfare to create a highly mobile army well-suited to strategic operations deep in the enemy's homeland.

CHAPTER TWO

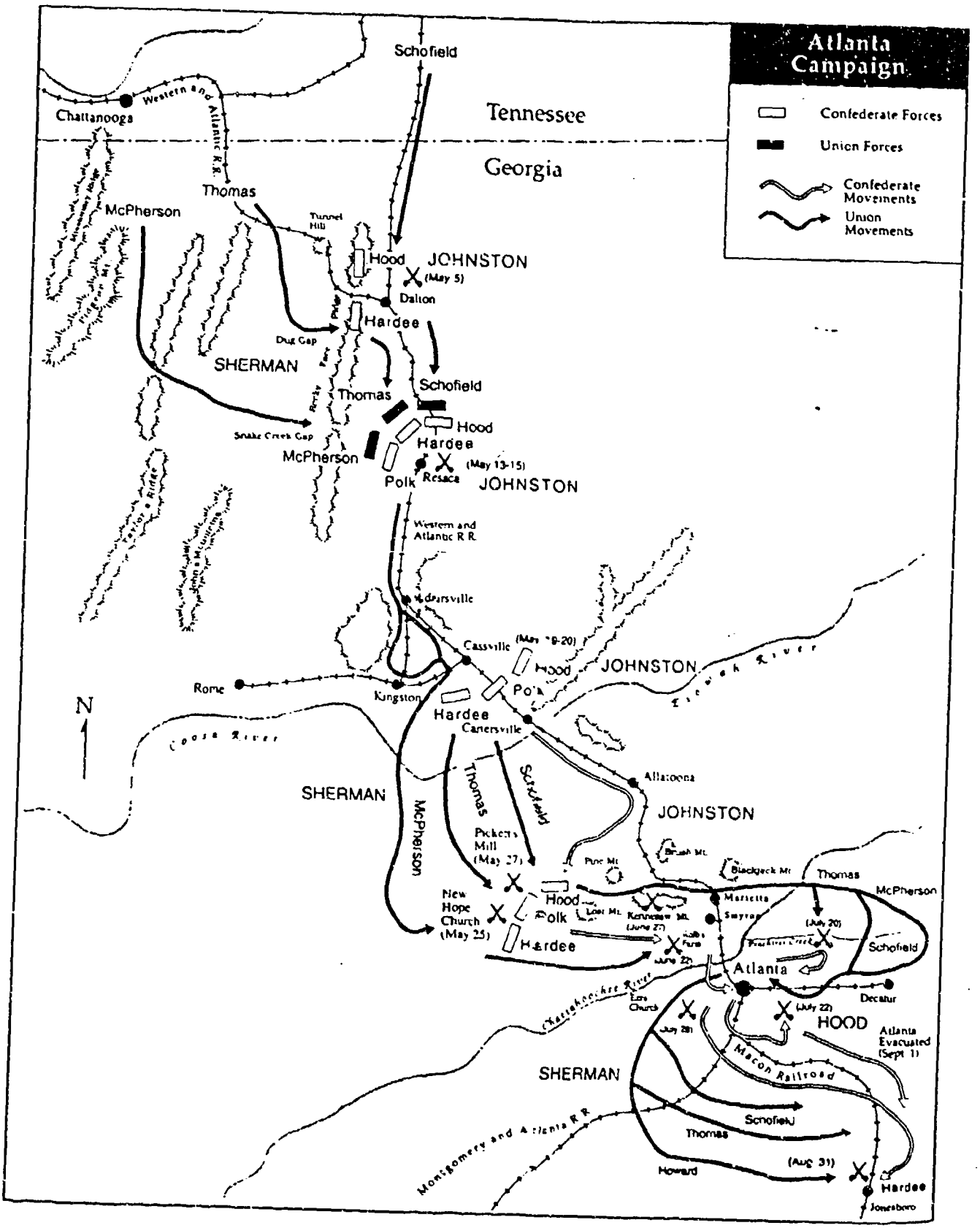
AN OVERVIEW OF SHERMAN'S 1864-65 CAMPAIGNS

Sherman fought three victorious campaigns after he assumed command of the Western theater in March 1864, each of which significantly affected the course of the war as a whole. Each campaign followed logically on the previous one and paved the way for the successes that were to follow.

The Atlanta Campaign: May-September 1864

Sherman's Atlanta campaign was an important victory in its own right and set the stage for his more famous campaign sequels--the marches through Georgia and the Carolinas. Sherman's order of battle for the Atlanta campaign consisted of three "armies," which were really corps: the Army of the Cumberland under General George Thomas, the Army of the Tennessee under General James McPherson, and the Army of the Ohio under General John Schofield--totalling about 100,000 troops. They were opposed by General Joseph E. Johnston and his 40,000-man Army of the Tennessee (soon to be reinforced to about 65,000 men), which occupied a strong position around Dalton, Georgia, some 25 miles southeast of Chattanooga (see Map 1). The Union army was tied to a single-track railroad line vulnerable to attack from Confederate raiders such as Nathan B. Forrest. The topography of northwestern Georgia featured thickly-wooded

MAP 1


Atlanta Campaign
Confederate Forces
Union Forces
Confederate Movements
Union Movements
Tennessee
Georgia
Schofield
Chattanooga
Western and Atlantic R.R.
Thomas
McPherson
Tunnel Hill
Hood
JOHNSTON
(May 5)
Dalton
Hardee
Dug Gap
SHERMAN
Rocky Face
Schofield
Thomas
Snake Creek Gap
Hood
Hardee
McPherson
(May 13-15)
Resaca
Polk
JOHNSTON
Western and Atlantic R.R.
Adairsville
Cassville
Hood
JOHNSTON
Etowah River
Rome
Kingston
Polk
Hardee
Cartersville
N
Coosa River
Allatoona
SHERMAN
Thomas
Schofield
McPherson
JOHNSTON
Pickett's Mill (May 27)
Pine Mt.
Brush Mt.
Blackjack Mt.
Thomas
McPherson
New Hope Church (May 25)
Hood
Polk
Hardee
Lost Mt.
Kennesaw Mt.
(June 27)
Marietta
Smyrna
(July 20)
Peachtree Creek
Schofield
Atlanta
Decatur
Chattahoochee River
Ezra Church
(July 28)
(July 22)
HOOD
Atlanta Evacuated (Sept 1)
Macon Railroad
SHERMAN
Schofield
Thomas
Howard
(Aug 31)
Hardee
Jonesboro
Montgomery and Atlanta R.R.

hills and rapidly-flowing rivers and streams that strongly favored the defender.

Sherman began his advance on 5 May in conjunction with the onset of Grant's Virginia campaign. He fixed the enemy with two of his armies and moved McPherson's force around the Confederate left to a point where it threatened Confederate supply lines along the rail line back to Atlanta. Johnston was forced to withdraw. This series of maneuvers set a pattern that was repeated at Resaca, Cassville, and Allatoona Pass. At each of these locations, Sherman avoided frontal assaults and instead maneuvered around Johnston's left in order to threaten the enemy's rear, forcing the Confederates to withdraw.

The pace of the campaign slowed in June due to heavy rains and th reluctance of either commander to risk all-out battle unless the odds were heavily in his favor. Southern newspapers and some of Johnston's own commanders criticized his Fabian strategy, thereby undermining his authority. The exception to the general pattern of avoiding battle took place on 27 June at Kenesaw Mountain about 20 miles northwest of Atlanta, where Johnston was pressed by Jefferson Davis to make a stand. There Sherman's attacking armies were repulsed with moderate casualties. Sherman responded with a creeping turning movement against the Rebels at Kenesaw, forcing them to evacuate. The Northern

army pursued the Confederates toward Atlanta, pressing from the north and east, while attempting to threaten the rail lines leading out of the "Gate City of the South."

Frustrated with Johnston's cautious strategy, Jefferson Davis replaced him on 17 July with the more aggressive John Bell Hood, formerly a corps commander in the Army of the Tennessee.[2] Hood attacked Sherman's army three times but was repulsed each time with heavy losses, forcing him to fall back to Atlanta. After some bloody but indecisive Union attempts to sever the Confederate supply lines, the North finally occupied Jonesboro, about 18 miles south of Atlanta along the rail line to Savannah. Hood attacked the entrenched Union forces at Jonesboro on 30-31 August, but it was futile. He again suffered heavy casualties and was forced to withdraw, leaving the city undefended.

The Union armies entered Atlanta on September 2 and occupied it for two months. They confiscated supplies and burned everything of value that they could not use themselves Hood, meanwhile, moved northwestward and began to tear up portions of the Union rail link to Chattanooga.

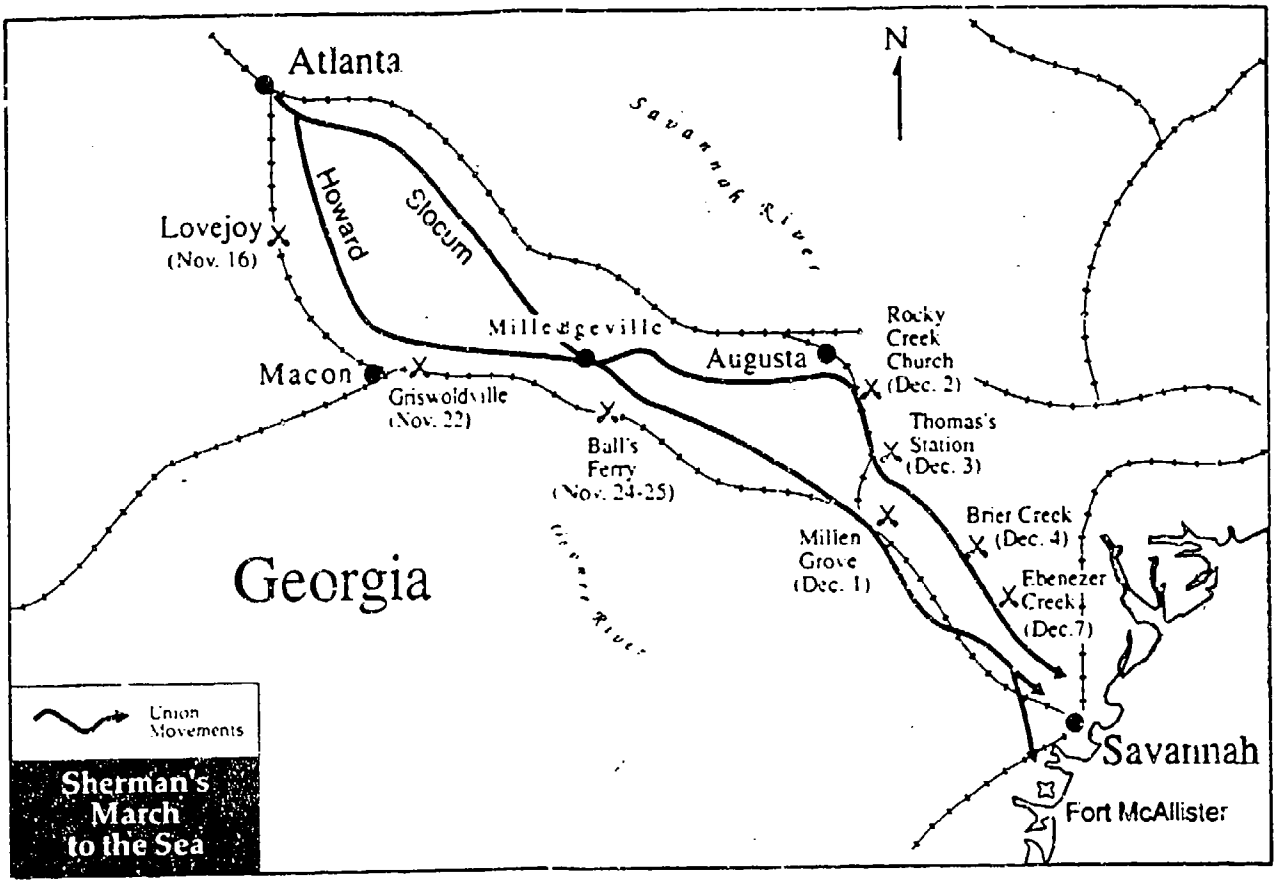
The March to the Sea: November-December 1864

Judging from his dispatches to Grant in April and May, Sherman's storied "March to the Sea" had been germinating in his mind even before he began the Atlanta campaign.[3] His

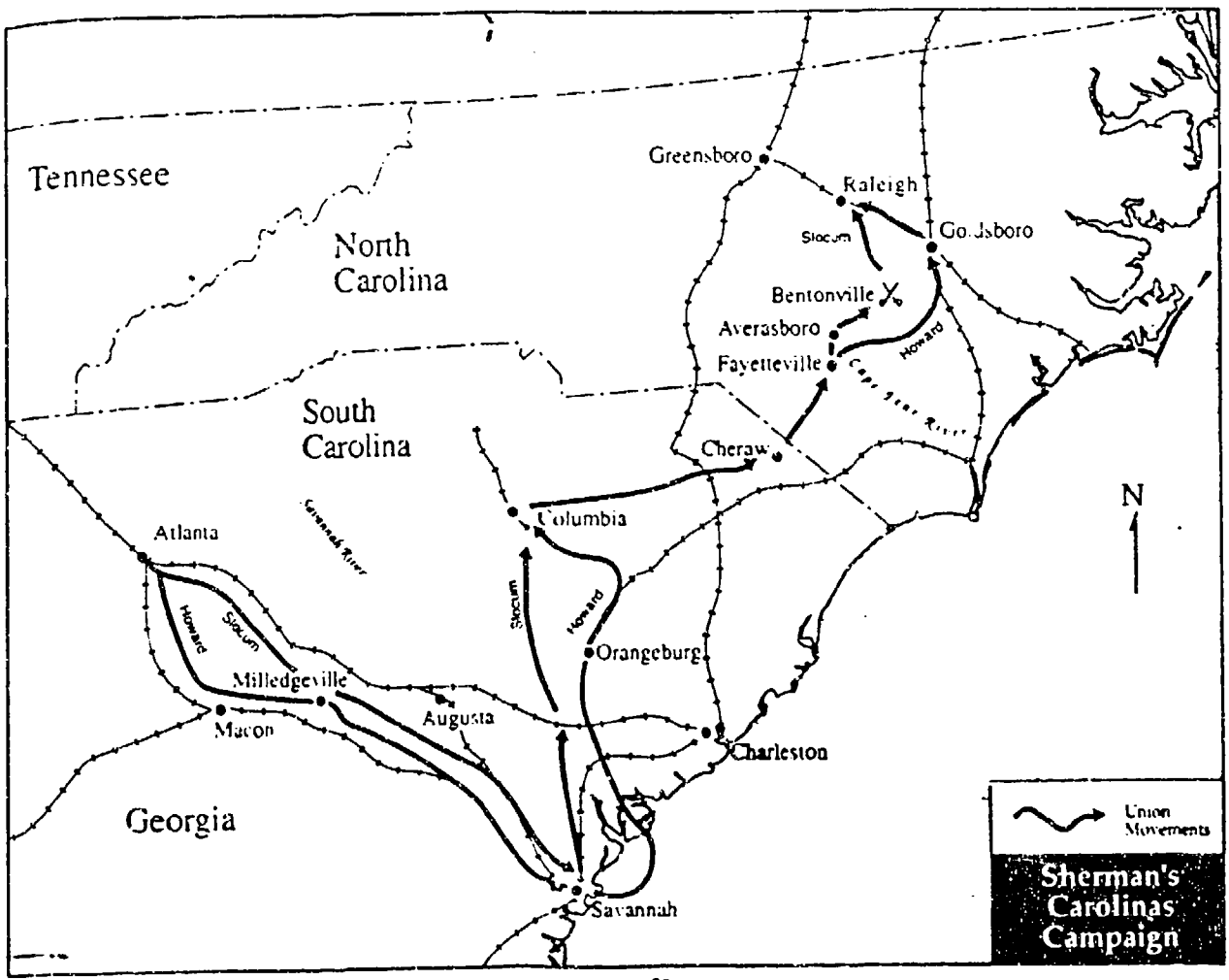
frustration at failing to catch and destroy Hood's army after Atlanta's fall reinforced his desire to regain the initiative. Accurately predicting that Hood might attack the key union base at Nashville, Sherman stationed Thomas and 60,000 troops in Tennessee. In Kingston, Georgia on 12 November, Sherman cut his own rail and telegraph communications to the rear and began the advance on the port city of Savannah, 330 miles to the southeast.

Sherman's march through Georgia was almost entirely a strategic movement as the tactical actions that it provoked were relatively few. Union cavalry guarded the flanks and rear of the army, which had been divided into a right wing of two corps under Major General Oliver O. Howard and a left wing of two corps under Major General Henry W. Slocum.[4] By directing the two wings to advance on diverging axes, Sherman was able to threaten both Macon and Augusta and thereby prevent the Confederates from massing against him (see Map 2). Resistance was light. About 3,500 Confederate cavalry under General Joseph Wheeler and the Georgia militia tried to harass Union cavalry and foraging patrols but did little damage, and a militia attack against a rear-guard Union brigade on 22 November near Macon failed. The Union army was now essentially unimpeded as it advanced an average of 12 miles per day on a front whose width varied between thirty and sixty miles.

MAP 2


Atlanta
N
Savannah River
Howard
Slocum
Lovejoy
(Nov. 16)
Milledgeville
Augusta
Rocky
Creek
Church
(Dec. 2)
Macon
Griswoldville
(Nov. 22)
Thomas's
Station
(Dec. 3)
Ball's
Ferry
(Nov. 24-25)
Brier Creek
(Dec. 4)
Millen
Grove
(Dec. 1)
Georgia
Ebenezer
Creek
(Dec.7)
Union
Movements
Savannah
Sherman's
March
to the Sea
Fort McAllister

MAP 3


Tennessee
Greensboro
Raleigh
North
Carolina
Slocum
Goldsboro
Bentonville
Averasboro
Howard
Fayetteville
Cape Fear River
South
Carolina
Cheraw
N
Columbia
Atlanta
Savannah River
Howard
Slocum
Slocum
Howard
Orangeburg
Milledgeville
Augusta
Macon
Charleston
Georgia
Union
Movements
Savannah
Sherman's
Carolinas
Campaign

Sherman's troops lived off the land. Companies of about fifty men from each brigade were authorized by a general order to "forage liberally on the country."[5] The foragers, nicknamed "bummers," took all the food they could carry from farms and plantations, which had just completed a particularly fruitful fall harvest, and usually burned what was left. They also took mules, horses, and livestock, killing what they could not use. Other Union troops destroyed long stretches of railroad line by burning the ties and telegraph poles and using these fires to heat the rails to the point where they could be twisted around a tree, creating what the troops called "Sherman's hairpins."

Sherman's army left in its wake virtually nothing of use to the Confederates. Devastation was widespread due to Union foraging and destruction as well as to a sporadically-enforced scorched earth policy by the Rebels. Discipline broke down among some Northern units and soldiers, who looted and pillaged items of no military value. Georgia unionists, black refugees from slavery, and Rebel partisans and deserters also contributed to the lawlessness, pillaging, and disorder.

Sherman's forces neared Savannah in mid-December. After capturing Fort McAllister to the south, they were able to open communications with the Union Navy. The Confederate garrison then fled Savannah, and the city was captured along

with 150 heavy guns, large stockpiles of ammunition, and 25,000 bales of cotton. During the five weeks it occupied the city, Sherman's army tried to destroy all items of military value that could not be confiscated as it prepared for the next campaign.

The March Through the Carolinas: January-March 1865

In his memoirs, Sherman called the 425-mile march through the Carolinas ten times more important than the march to the sea.[6] Logistically, it was much more difficult. The march through Georgia took place in near-perfect Autumn weather against light resistance along rivers that usually paralleled the army's line of march. By contrast in the 1865 march, Sherman's army had to cross nine major rivers and numerous streams, tributaries, and swamps in the rainiest winter in two decades.[7] The campaign goal was to further reduce the war economy of the South, cut off the Carolina ports, and--most importantly--threaten Lee's army from the rear.

Sherman's army of 60,000 men redeployed to various points in the southern tip of South Carolina in late January and began their northward march on 1 February (see Map 3). Sherman skillfully masked his intermediate objective--Columbia--by threatening both Augusta and Charleston. The four Union corps advanced in a Y formation on separate routes, with the flanking corps supported by the central

corps.[8] Union forces relied on construction troops, including thousands of recently-freed slaves, that had been formed into pioneer battalions to corduroy roads and build bridges and causeways across the inhospitable terrain. Rebel cavalry again tried to harass and delay the Northern army, but foul weather was the greatest drag on the Union advance.

On 17-18 February, Northern armies occupied South Carolina's capital, Columbia. A fire devastated the city and destroyed many residential areas.[9] Northern armies again devastated the industries and transportation networks in their path. They also cut all Confederate rail links to the sea, forcing the evacuations of the vital port cities of Charleston on 17 February and Wilmington on the 22nd.

After Columbia the Union army made a giant rightward pivot towards Fayetteville. Meanwhile, Johnston had been reinstalled as the commander of Confederate forces opposing Sherman, but the Rebel General had barely 20,000 soldiers in his command. Rebel cavalry and guerrillas killed small numbers of Union foragers and couriers but to no effect.[10] Sherman kept the enemy off balance using right and left flanking movements until mid-March, when it became clear that he was headed for Goldsboro. Confederate forces stepped up their harassment, and on 19-21 March at Bentonville fought the last major engagement of the

campaign. The Union army repulsed the Confederates after sharp action.

At Goldsboro, North Carolina, Sherman regained communications with the North via the rail link to the port city of New Bern. His army rested and refitted for another march to link up with Grant--a plan that was preempted by Lee's surrender at Appomattox on 9 April. Sherman then began preparations for a campaign to destroy Johnston's army, but the fight had gone out of the Confederate soldiers. Johnston surrendered his army on 26 April 1865.

CHAPTER THREE

CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS

Sherman's contribution to the Union's victory lay in his strategic vision and his mastery of the operational art. Together they enabled him to plan, direct, and execute campaigns whose strategic impact was felt far beyond the Western theater. This section will discuss Sherman's view of the war as a whole and his comprehensive approach to theater strategy and campaign planning.

Sherman's Strategic Vision

Clausewitz wrote that the first and most comprehensive strategic question for a commander to answer is the nature of the war he is fighting.[11] Early in the war, Sherman was one of the few people on either side of the Mason-Dixon Line who discerned the nature of the coming war with any degree of accuracy.[12] As a military professional, he understood that to suppress the rebellion would require the North to take the offensive in a war of conquest aimed at overthrowing the Confederate government. To win such a war, the North would have to break the Confederacy's will to fight. Southern will was based on the myth of the South's moral superiority, which they believed could overcome the North's quantitative superiority. Fire-eating Southern newspapers reinforced the public's confidence that the

Confederate government, backed by invincible armies, could defend them from Union armies.

Sherman realized that to break the South's will to fight, the North would have to shatter its illusions about the Confederacy's invulnerability. He directed his campaigns not only against Southern armies but against Southern morale and resources as well. Sherman justified his campaigns in Georgia and the Carolina in these terms:

> I attach more importance to these deep incisions into the enemy's country, because this war differs from European war in this particular: we are not only fighting hostile armies but a hostile people, and must make old and young, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war, as well as their organized armies... Thousands who had been deceived by their lying newspapers to believe that we were being whipped all the time now realize the truth, and have no appetite for a repetition of the same experience.[13]

The movement of a large, powerful Union army through nearly 1,000 miles of enemy territory--apart from its military impact--demonstrated to Southerners and the world that the Rebel government could not protect its citizens or its territory. Witnessing the unstoppable advance of Sherman's strategic offensive, the people of the South quickly lost faith in the optimistic pronouncements of the Government and the newspapers on the course of the war. Concerned about the fate of their defenseless families, soldiers in the once-proud Confederate armies began to lose heart. As defeatism spread, desertions increased. Sherman

was acutely aware of this psychological impact. He wrote that: "My aim then was, to whip the rebels, to humble their pride, to follow them to the inmost recesses, and make them fear and dread us."[14]

In planning the 1864-65 campaigns, Sherman combined his vision of strategy in an unlimited war with the emerging science of industrial-age logistics. As a result, his campaigns accomplished the strategic goal of devastating the transportation and logistical facilities that fed the Rebel armies. His men tore up hundreds of miles of Southern rail lines, including about 100 miles of line between Macon and Augusta, and they totally wrecked the vital Macon-Savannah railroad, which had supplied Lee's army with food from Georgia and munitions made in Columbus and Macon.[15] Northern forces razed dozens of major munitions works, railroad yards, and factories. They burned hundreds of plantations and burned or seized thousands of wagon loads of food, cotton, and agricultural implements. The presence of a powerful Union army in the heart of Dixie also encouraged tens of thousands of slaves to stop toiling and to follow the blue coats, which deprived the South's fragile economy of labor. Sherman estimated that his marches destroyed about $100,000,000 in Southern property--an astronomical sum for the time.[16]

Strategy in a Supporting Theater

Although he designed his campaigns to have independent strategic effects, Sherman never lost sight of the fact that his theater mission was to support the Union's main effort against Lee's army in Virginia. He showed none of the parochialism that McClellan and, in later wars, MacArthur, Montgomery, and Rommel would demonstrate in believing their theaters to be the most important. Sherman commented on his critical supporting role at the beginning of the march to the sea:

> I was strongly inspired by the feeling that the movement on our part was a direct attack upon the rebel army and the rebel capital at Richmond, though a full thousand miles of hostile country intervened, and that, for better or worse, it would end the war.[17]

Both marches, therefore, should be considered primarily as strategic movements to threaten Lee's rear area and his lines of communication.

Sherman's 1864-65 campaigns had both sequential and cumulative strategic effects on the South's ability to make war.[18] Sequential effects--advancing via Savannah in a series of three related campaigns on Lee's strategic rear area--are the military results of Sherman's marches. The cumulative effects--undermining Rebel moral and waging economic war--took a direct toll on the total power of the South.[19]

Sherman always analyzed and defined his missions within the context of the Union's grand strategy. During the planning period between campaigns, he carried on an lively discussion with Grant via letters and the telegraph over the best use of his forces. He demonstrated both a firm grasp of the military realities in his theater of operations and moral courage in advocating what he thought was the best course of action despite the reservations of his superiors. The most notable example of this was his advocacy of the Georgia campaign despite the doubts of Grant and Lincoln, both of whom feared that Sherman's army faced grave risks if it did not first destroy Hood's army. Sherman countered that to back track in order to chase Hood would play into the enemy's hands and force the Union army to give up everything it had won during the spring and summer. Similarly, when Grant proposed sending troops ships to retrieve Sherman's army at Savannah, Sherman balked He contended that the two months it would take to move the ships and men could be better spent marching northward, destroying the remnants of the Rebel rail networks.

Campaign Planning: Employing the Operational Art

Sherman was a skillful and meticulous campaign planner. Judging from his correspondence, memoirs, and the testimony of his staff, he clearly used a process virtually identical to the commander's estimate[20] in evaluating his mission, the situation, enemy capabilities, and enemy and Union courses

of action. His correspondence with Grant is filled with analyses of various courses of action as well as evaluation of the mission, enemy forces, Union troops available, time considerations, and terrain (METT-T). According to his staff, Sherman never ceased to re-assess the current situation and to plan several steps ahead.

Operationally, Sherman had a strong preference for bold maneuver rather than firepower to dislodge and dislocate opposing armies. Sherman sought to "put his enemy on the horns of dilemma."[21] He would maneuver his corps rapidly towards several possible objectives, thus keeping his enemy off balance and forcing him to divide his forces. During his march through Georgia, for example, Sherman states that his first goal was to place his army "between Macon and Augusta...obliging the enemy to divide his forces to defend not only those points, but Millen, Savannah, and Charleston."[22] In South Carolina, the Union General maneuvered the wings and cavalry of his army so as to force the Confederates to cover Augusta, Charleston, and Branchville, before he went on through to Columbia.

By spreading the Rebel defenses and severing their supply lines, Sherman was able to bring about the fall of major Southern cities without costly and protracted siege operations. His aide-de-camp reports that when asked whether he would take Charleston, he replied, "Yes, but I

shall not sacrifice life in its capture. If I am able to reach certain vital points, Charleston will fall of itself."[23] Despite his ferocious reputation, Sherman had little desire for the kind of unrelenting, bloody fighting that Grant was conducting in Virginia.

Part of Sherman's success was due to factors external to his theater. Grant pinned down the Army of Northern Virginia, the Confederacy's best army, in the last year of the war while Thomas eliminated the Army of the Tennessee as an effective force in the Battle of Nashville on 15-16 December 1864. In addition, by mid-1864 the Union naval blockade already had begun to seriously weaken the Southern economy. Therefore, after the Atlanta campaign Sherman's army usually faced only small, poorly-equipped Confederate forces.

CHAPTER FOUR

LESSONS FOR TODAY

Sherman's 1864-65 campaigns offer some useful lessons on theater command issues and on campaign planning. The key to Sherman's success was his single-minded focus on how to produce military conditions in his theater that would bring about achievement of strategic goals. His efficiency can be attributed to the use of several force multipliers.

Logistics. Sherman's campaigns demonstrate the importance of logistics discipline and efficient supply. He demanded discipline in supply for fear an overabundance of material brought by rail could bog down the army and increase its vulnerability. He imposed a ceiling on the number of non-combatants permitted in his army in order to reduce supply requirements. Particularly after cutting his own supply lines back to Chattanooga and Nashville, Sherman set strict limits on the amount of equipment that units could transport in order to permit the wagons to be loaded only with vital items, principally ammunition, carpentry gear for bridging and pontoons, and medicines. Sherman also set an austere personal example by having a small staff and sharing the spartan living conditions of the soldiers, and he demanded that his senior officers do the same.

Having limited demand, Sherman insisted that the supplies his army did request be delivered promptly in the amounts requested. Before the Atlanta campaign, he took over supreme control of the railroads, which had been run by the departmental commanders, and ordered all trains reaching Nashville from Louisville be detained for use on the Chattanooga line.[24] Sherman then banned civil traffic on the Nashville-Chattanooga rail line a month before the onset of the Atlanta campaign in order to ensure adequate buildup of supplies despite Lincoln's request that he modify it.[25] During the marching campaigns, he closely monitored the foraging effort in order to gauge whether the troops were getting sufficient supplies on a regular basis. Sherman also monitored the delivery of seaborne supplies.

Mobility and Maneuver. Related to his focus on efficient logistics, Sherman demanded a high degree of mobility from his army. He saw mobility as the key to threatening the enemy's lines of communication and avoiding costly, unrewarding frontal assaults. Sherman wrote that before the 1864 campaigns began, he wanted "to convert all parts of the army into a mobile machine, willing and able to start at a minute's notice, and to subsist on the scantiest food."[26] Sherman also realized that over reliance on railroad-borne supplies bogged down an invading army by forcing it to wait for deliveries that were vulnerable to interdiction by enemy cavalry and partisan raids. He chose

instead to cut his own supply lines and attack the enemy's. In one stroke, he avoided the potential pitfall of over-extension and set out to destroy the Confederate transportation system. In doing so, Sherman solved the problem of culmination--the progressive erosion of combat power on the part of an attacker due, in large part, to increasing stresses on his lines of supply.[27] The strategic mobility of Sherman's army was its principal weapon as it operated deep in enemy territory. Mobility aided deception and prevented the Rebels from positioning their forces in effective blocking positions.

Tailored Forces. Many Union generals wanted the biggest, most heavily-equipped force they could get. Sherman, however, wanted his army adapted to its principal tasks: rapid maneuvering, foraging, and engagements. Before setting out for the Atlantic seacoast, Sherman's staff purged the army of wounded, sick, and other unfit soldiers and reduced the number of cannons to sixty-five. He wrote, "In real war...an army is efficient for action and motion exactly in the inverse ratio of its impedimenta [sic]."[28] The army also maintained a large and able group of engineer and construction troops, dubbed pioneer battalions, which performed miracles of military engineering during the marching campaigns. The pioneer battalions enabled the army to advance at an average rate of about 13

miles per day despite enemy harassment and--in the Carolinas--bad weather and unfavorable topography.

All-Source Intelligence. Sherman was a voracious consumer of both clandestinely-acquired and open-source intelligence. He relied on Thomas's army for reporting on the enemy's order of battle during the Atlanta campaign because it had "the best body of spies."[29] Sherman noted approvingly that "Thomas's spies brought him frequent and accurate reports of Jos. Johnston's army at Dalton," which gave the enemy's strength, composition, and general disposition.[30]

Sherman also used unorthodox sources of intelligence. For his Atlanta and Georgia campaigns, he obtained the U.S. census-tables of 1860 and a tax compilation of the Controller of the State of Georgia, which contained detailed information on the population and incomes of every county in the state.[31] Sherman used this data to direct his foraging bummers toward the richest farm regions and maximize the material damage to the Southern aristocracy. Sherman debriefed refugee slaves for information on enemy movements and the location of food and material hidden by plantation owners. And, in an early version of signals intelligence, Sherman learned of the death of Confederate General Leonidas Polk when an alert Union signal-officer broke the Rebels' "key" and read their signal flags.[32]

Inter-Service Cooperation. Although Sherman's marching campaigns were ground operations, naval forces played important supporting roles. In the march to the sea, Sherman depended on linking up with the Union Navy in Savannah, which served as his sea bridge to the North. Although forage provided most of the basic food requirements for his men and animals, Sherman needed the Navy for troop replacements and reinforcements and for medical evacuations. The Navy also delivered certain types of ammunition, clothing, equipment, and medicine produced only in the North.

Without the Navy's ability to resupply his army and provide coastal support and protection, Sherman might have been unwilling to undertake the campaigns through Georgia and the Carolinas. In the contingency planning for the latter campaign, Sherman intended to use the Navy as a seaborne supporting force if his army got in trouble. In that event, Sherman planned to head for the nearest Carolina port for reinforcements, supplies, and--in the worst case--evacuation. As part of the actual campaign, Sherman directed General John Schofield's 23rd Corps to be transported by sea to New Bern, from which it marched to reinforce Sherman's army at Goldsboro.

Sound Command Relationships. The Civil War and virtually all other wars abound with examples of command relationships poisoned by distrust, bad faith, jealousy, and pettiness. In contrast, Sherman had excellent relations with his most important superior, Grant, and with most of his corps commanders.[33] His correspondence with Grant reveals a mutual relationship of friendship, loyalty, shared values, and unshakable confidence in each other's competence and integrity. Each man was able disagree and dissent with the other's proposals in a tone of professionalism and courtesy.

Sherman's constructive relationship with his superiors and subordinates singles him out among his contemporaries. Infighting among many senior officers of the Army of the Potomac before Grant's arrival undermined the troops' confidence and the army's effectiveness.[34] Confederate armies, except for Lee's, also were wracked with dissension among senior commanders. Hood's complaints about Johnston's cautious defensive strategy during the Atlanta campaign undermined Southern confidence in the war effort and lead to the latter's dismissal. According to all reliable accounts, Sherman's army was free of that sort of debilitating strife.[35]

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Sherman's 1864-65 campaigns were theater-level operations that produced direct strategic effects. Sherman's success was due to three factors: close strategic coordination with Grant, a sound concept of logistics, and superb campaign planning and execution. For his ability to merge logistic and strategic considerations, Sherman deserves to be considered an early master of the operational art in the industrial age, along with Grant. By cutting his own lines of communications and requiring his army to live off the enemy's country, Sherman solved his army's supply problem by creating a much worse one for the enemy. Indeed, the South, because of its inability to resist Sherman's bummers, financed much of the cost of its own destruction.

Sherman's ranking as one of the greatest American theater strategists and campaign planners is not due to his record of winning battles. Grant and Thomas did the work of destroying the main Rebel armies in the field. Instead, Sherman wore down the enemy's will and ability to fight by conducting strategic operations deep in the core states of the Confederacy. He preferred to maneuver towards the enemy's rear areas, forcing a hasty withdrawal to less favorable positions, and repeating the process. Sherman

employed a strategy of exhaustion by means of maneuver and devastation of the enemy's homeland, while Grant adhered to a strategy of annihilation aimed at destroying the South's greatest army by combat.[36] Together the two strategies resulted in the total collapse of the Confederacy.

Sherman's strategic vision was comprehensive. While never losing sight of tactical and logistical issues, he was constantly searching for courses of action that would provide the greatest strategic gains. In operating deep in the enemy's rear areas, Sherman achieved a remarkable degree of strategic synergy. His campaigns in Georgia and the Carolinas accomplished four strategic aims; namely, they (1) destroyed vast amounts of Southern resources, (2) wrecked the South's ability to transport supplies to its armies in the field, (3) shattered the confidence of Southern civilians and soldiers in the field (while rejuvenating the North's), and (4) posed an increasingly direct threat to Lee's army. Rarely in history have one commander's campaigns provided such sizable strategic gains in return for such a relatively small investment of blood and treasure.

NOTES

[1] His official title was Commander of the Military Division of the Mississippi, which consisted of the Departments of the Ohio, Cumberland, Tennessee, and Arkansas.

[2] Sherman and Grant believed that Johnston's cautious Fabian strategy was the correct one in view of Northern war weariness and the lengthening lines of communication of Sherman's army. Grant, Memoirs, p. 384; Sherman, Memoirs, II, pp. 72, 75.

[3] Letter to Grant, dated April 10th, 1864. Sherman, Memoirs, II, p. 28.

[4] See Special Field Order No. 120, dated 9 November 1864 for a description of the arrangements for the campaign. Sherman, Memoirs, II, pp. 174-176.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 221.

[7] McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, p. 827.

[8] Ibid., p. 828.

[9] Southerners blamed Sherman for the burning of Columbia, but he denied responsibility and his many of his troops fought most of the night to contain the fire. Most historians who have studied the issue have tended to agree with Sherman that the burning of large quantities of cotton and other consumables by retreating Confederate forces and high winds were mostly to blame for the conflagaration rather than Union armies. Lucas, Sherman and the Burning of Columbia.

[10] Nichols, The Story of the March, p. 181.

[11] "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish...the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions, and the most comprehensive." Carl von Clausewitz, On War, pp. 88-89.

[12] Sherman's belief that a huge army would be required to conquer the South was unpopular in the North early in the war and contributed to newspaper allegations that he was "insane." Sherman, Memoirs, I, pp. 200-218.

[13] Letter to Army Chief of Staff, Major General Henry W. Halleck, dated December 24, 1864. Sherman, Memoirs, II, pp. 226-228.

[14] Ibid., p. 249.

[15] Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, How the North Won, pp. 655-56.

[16] Ibid., p. 654.

[17] Sherman, Memoirs, II, p. 170.

[18] The concept of sequential versus cumulative strategies was suggested by Dr. Herbert Rosinski and developed further by Admiral Joseph Wylie. Most land campaigns involve sequential strategies: "a series a series of discrete steps or actions, with each one of this series of actions growing naturally out of, and dependent on, the one preceeding it." Cumulative strategies, by contrast, involve "a collection of lesser actions, but these lesser or individual actions are not sequentially interdependent." The psychological and economic warfare inherent in Sherman's march campaigns may be considered elements of a cumulative strategy, while his steady advance towards Lee's rear via Savannah may be considered a sequential strategy. Admiral Joseph C. Wylie, Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control, pp. 200-201.

[19] Sherman Atlanta campaign had another critical effect on the course of the war (albeit one that Sherman probably did not plan for). By restoring Northern confidence in the war effort, it probably sealed Lincoln's victory in the 1864 election. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, pp. 772-775.

[20] The commander's estimate of the situation is defined in various Joint Pubs as a logical process of reasoning by which a commander considers all the circumstances affecting the military situation and arrives at a decision as to a course of action to be taken to accomplish the mission.

[21] Quoted in an essay by B.H. Liddell-Hart on "The Theory of Strategy." George Edward Thibault, ed. The Art and Practice of Military Strategy, p. 146,147.

[22] Report of the Georgia Campaign to Major General H. W. Halleck, dated January 1st, 1865. George Ward Nichols, The Story of the Great March, p. 328.

[23] George Ward Nichols, Story of the Great March, p. 179.

[24] B.H. Liddell-Hart, Sherman, pp. 234-235.

[25] Sherman, Memoirs, II, p. 10.

[26] Ibid., p. 31.

[27] "In the offense, the culminating point is the point in time and location when the attacker's combat power no longer exceeds that of the defender." Department of the Army. FM 100-5 Operations. June, 1993, p. 6-8.

[28] Sherman, Memoirs, II, p. 403.

[29] Ibid., p. 9.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., p. 31.

[32] Ibid., p. 54.

[33] Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton had a bitter feud at the war's end over civil-military relations, the terms for the surrender of Johnston's army, and the treatment of the blacks in Sherman's theater. Sherman also had a falling out with Halleck, but neither rift affected the outcome of the conflict.

[34] Much of T. Harry William's classic study of the North's civil-military relations, Lincoln and His Generals, deals with the Federals' poor command relationships during the first three years of the war.

[35] Nichols, The Story of the Great March, numerous citations; Grant, Memoirs, pp. 568-570; see Grant's private letter to Sherman, dated 4 March 1864, and Sherman's response dated 10 March, for evidence of their friendship and mutual respect. Sherman, Memoirs, II, pp. 398-400.

[36] Weigley, Russell F. The American Way of War, p. xxii. Professor Weigley uses the comparative concept of strategies of annihilation and exhaustion developed by the German military historian, Hans Delbrueck.

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