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THE EDUCATION OF A FIELD MARSHAL
WELLINGTON IN INDIA AND IBERIA

A Thesis Presented

by

DAVID G. COTTER

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May, 1992

Department of History

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THE EDUCATION OF A FIELD MARSHAL
WELLINGTON IN INDIA AND IBERIA

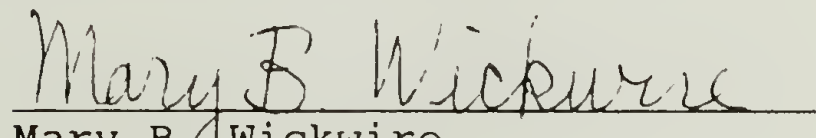
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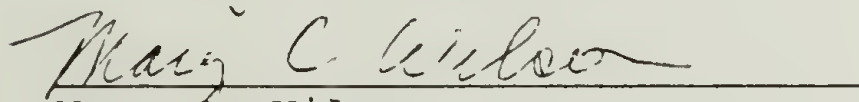
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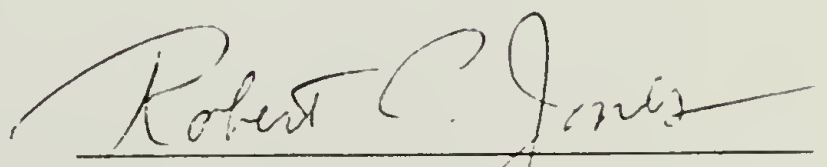
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INTRODUCTION

You think Wellington is a great general because you have been beaten by him. I tell you Wellington is a bad general . . .¹

Napoleon
18 June 1815

Napoleon uttered those words to his chief of staff, Marshal Soult* on 18 June 1815, the morning of the battle of Waterloo. Mellowed but never cowed after his defeat at that battle, Napoleon eventually allowed that, as a field commander, Wellington was probably his equal, ". . .with the advantage of having more prudence."² Napoleon's later comments attest to an historical truth, that Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington was an outstanding general, perhaps Britain's greatest field captain.

At the time Napoleon Bonaparte faced the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo, the duke was the best military commander in the world. In full command of the time-proven elements of military success, the field marshal was also an innovator. He displayed an exceptional grasp of all aspects of campaign. A master of strategy, operations, tactics and logistics, he broke with the accepted norms of the profession to propose fitness regimens for his soldiers, and to pursue tirelessly the acquisition of supplies and materiel required for the well-being of his troops. One of

*Marshal Nicolas Jean de Dieu Soult.

Wellington's most unusually profitable qualities was his ability to coalesce winning armies from polyglot formations that operated under vastly differing systems and often spoke many different languages. Further, he dealt with the twin plagues of military operations, communication and transportation, before he ever faced an enemy. The duke's emphasis on protecting his soldiers by ensuring their welfare coupled with his extensive preparations before entering a conflict was the beginning of a British martial renaissance that continued throughout the nineteenth century. Soldiers will endure almost any hardship if their commander cares about them and leads them to victory. Wellington did just that, and inspired Captain John Kincaid's comment: "We would rather see his long nose in a fight than a reinforcement of ten thousand men any day."³

Of particular interest is the process of the duke's military education. He was certainly a man of intellect and keen insight, but commanders are made, not born. Like all late eighteenth century officers, Wellington had to acquire his expertise through study and experience. He applied himself to that task in his typical fashion and excelled beyond his colleagues to become a master of modern warfare. He set himself apart from his brother officers by his singular and total dedication to success.

There is no question that Sir Arthur Wellesley*, the Duke of Wellington, belongs to an exclusive cotillion of military masters that stand apart from and above most generals; a small pantheon peopled by the likes of Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon. My purpose is not to reiterate Wellington's exploits in order to glorify him. That has already been done, many times, by many others. The goal of this essay is to examine how the ". . .quiet, dejected and observant" boy of twelve, obsessed with his violin, grew into the field marshal who defeated, most often in the face of superior numbers, the vaunted Imperial French army and, ultimately, Napoleon himself.⁴

*Born Arthur Wesley, he became Wellesley when his older brother, Richard, changed the family name to Wellesley in 1798. Arthur was not created Viscount Wellington until after the battle of Talavera in 1809.

CHAPTER 1

TO COLONEL BY PURCHASE

Youth and Education

Arthur Wesley was born in Dublin on 1 May 1769.¹ His father, the second Lord Mornington, was an accomplished musician but a poor financial manager. The passive and unassuming youth took quickly to the music that his father brought to the home and by age twelve Arthur showed real promise on the violin. The Earl's early death in 1781 left the family ". . . financially embarrassed" and the future duke without a patron for his musical endeavors.²

Arthur's mother, Lady Mornington, was much more pragmatic than her late husband and also less than fond of her middle son. According to one biographer, Sir Herbert Maxwell: "It is believed that she disliked Arthur as a boy, because of his slow, thick speech and dull manner, which gave him an air of stupidity."³ With the help and approval of Arthur's older brother, Richard, the Earl of Mornington, Lady Mornington situated Arthur at Eton. While not unsuccessful there, he showed no real promise and, as funds were short and there were other more promising sons to educate, she withdrew the future field marshal from Eton in the summer of 1784, bemoaning Arthur's mediocrity and

apparent lack of drive: "I don't know what I shall do with my awkward son Arthur."⁴

As a youth, then, the future Duke of Wellington displayed none of the qualities that would so distinguish him in later life. Frustrated with her son's chronic underachievement and worried about his prospects, Lady Mornington complained that Arthur was ". . . food for powder and nothing more."⁵ Accordingly, his mother began to steer him toward the military, though the least attractive of possible careers, by enrolling him in the Royal Academy of Equitation at Angers, in the present day department of Maine-et-Loire, France. This preparatory institution, an historic quasi-military school, continued the martial traditions of old. In addition to equestrian and fencing skills, the students also learned mathematics and humanities.⁶ At the Royal Academy the young student gained a working knowledge of French, a knowledge that would serve the future general well during his years facing Napoleon's armies. Further, Wesley developed socially from the almost painfully shy, lonely and clumsy youth into an engaging and dynamic young man. Moreover, pale and often sickly, at Angers he seems to have developed a more robust constitution. In short, he excelled. It was as though he had finally found his niche. The weak and diminutive young boy who had entered the academy at Angers left it in late 1786, a robust seventeen year old brimming with confidence and

thoroughly steeped in the traditions of old Europe. When his mother first saw him she said: "I do not believe there is my ugly boy Arthur."⁷

Early Career

Britain's army officer corps has long been a repository for the flotsam of the aristocracy, especially so in the latter eighteenth century. In this era a career in the army was a last resort for many of offspring of the high born. Entrance and promotion in the infantry and cavalry, based neither on merit nor seniority, depended on the candidate's ability to purchase a desired position and was, of course, subject to all manner of corruption. Only the Ordnance branches, artillery and engineers, differed, requiring formal education and promotion based solely on seniority.⁸ Arthur Wesley entered into this system in 1787 when he acquired an ensign's commission in the 73rd Highland Regiment, purchased on his behalf by his older brother Richard.

One would think that upon assumption of a commission, an officer would commence formal military training and education. Such was not the case in eighteenth century Britain: Sandhurst, the royal military academy for the training of officers, was not founded until 1801. Arthur was

not, at first, particularly enamored of a military career and thought of it as a stepping stone to some other form of honorable employment. Yet he seemed determined to do well as an officer. According to one story, upon receiving his ensign's commission he remarked, ". . .since I have undertaken a profession I had better try to understand it."⁹ To that end he purportedly had one of his privates weighed, first without marching gear and then with full kit. When, in later years, an observer complimented his foresight Wellington replied:

I believe that I owe most of my success to the attention I always paid to the inferior part of tactics as a regimental officer. There were very few men in the army who knew these details better than I did; it is the foundation of all military knowledge. When you are sure that you know the power of your tools and the way to handle them, you are able to give your mind altogether to the greater considerations which the presence of the enemy forces on you.¹⁰

Wesley's complicated promotion and transfer history from his original date of commission, 7 March 1787, through his lieutenant colonelcy, 30 September 1793, also seems to reflect his determination to excel in his profession:

Promotion History:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Regiment</u>	<u>Rank</u>
7 March 1787	73rd Foot	Ensign
25 December 1787	76th Foot	Lieutenant
23 January 1788	41st Foot	Lieutenant
25 June 1789	12th Lt Dragoons	Lieutenant
30 June 1791	58th Foot	Captain
31 October 1792	18th Lt Dragoons	Captain
30 April 1793	33rd Foot	Major
30 September 1793	33rd Foot	Lieut. Colonel

Obviously he rose in rank relatively rapidly while alternating between the cavalry and the infantry. His many transfers would certainly stand him in good stead in the future. Rarely could a junior officer claim the breadth of exposure to both mounted and infantry units apparent in Arthur's early years.

During those early years he served in mundane assignments, most notably as aide-de-camp to Lord Buckingham, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, from spring of 1788 to early 1794.¹¹ Concurrent with his military service in Ireland, Wesley also sat in the Irish Parliament as member from the borough of Trim. Since he participated actively as a member, his aide-de-camp duties did not seem to overwhelm him. During his tenure in the Irish Parliament he developed some public-speaking skills. According to one anecdote, an observer asked the name of the young hook-nosed member from Trim: "That," 'replied my friend,' "is Captain Wellesley [sic], a brother of Lord Mornington's, and one of the aides-de-camp of the Lord Lieutenant." "I suppose he never speaks," 'I added.' "You are wrong; he does speak sometimes, and when he does, believe me, it is always to the purpose."¹² It appears that Parliamentary public speaking served as the training ground for the future duke's legendary economy of speech.

Arthur rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the 33rd regiment in December, 1793, the unit he would lead to

distinction in India. With that rank Arthur assumed command of a battalion. By that time he seems to have changed his plans about his future and decided that his destiny lay in a military career. To that end he burned his violin, severing with it most ties to his youth.¹³ With no formal preparation for command, Wellesley found himself in charge of almost 700 soldiers, and he steeled his resolve to attain military competence. His resolve almost coincided with his first taste of combat. In early 1794, Lieutenant Colonel Wesley and the 33rd Foot were attached to a contingent under Lord Francis Rawdon-Hastings, Earl of Moira, assigned to relieve the distressed forces of the Duke of York, trapped by the French in Flanders. The Gallic forces had invaded the Low Countries after diplomatic relations between the French and British had ended, in 1793, in acrimonious declarations of war. Britain was understandably concerned for her own security with the hostile army of revolutionary France so close at hand.¹⁴ Thus, without benefit of training in strategy, tactics or the operational art, Arthur now would lead a battalion of soldiers in harm's way.

The reinforcing contingent landed in Flanders in the summer of 1794.¹⁵ For the British army and its commander in chief, the Duke of York, this campaign had failed in every sense of the word. Outnumbered and cornered in the hostile environs of Flanders, where Lord Moira had joined it, the army had retreated ignominiously into Holland. There

the incipient genius of the lieutenant colonel of the 33rd became obvious at an action at Boxtel. Wesley fought a successful infantry action against charging French cavalry. The disciplined and coordinated volley fire of the 33rd's muskets turned the French horsemen back.¹⁶ One can picture Wesley's force, drawn up in line, holding fire until commanded to do so, a tactic he would so often use with so much success throughout his military career (though hardly his innovation). Later, from October 1794 through January 1795, Wesley, by then a nominal brigade commander, led the rearguard of the retreating debacle that the British army in Flanders had become by that time. Essentially forgotten along the banks of the river Waal, Wesley and his brigade held their position until ordered to withdraw in February 1795.

Important to the development of the future field marshal during these dark days of retreat was his witnessing the conditions endured by his troops. Much of Arthur's later success owed to his detailed consideration for the welfare of the rank and file, and his extensive preparations before a campaign to ensure that welfare. During the harsh winter of 1794-1795, when the bulk of the British army had retreated to winter quarters, Wesley's 33rd remained, holding the rear under constant pressure. "The French," he said, "keep us in a perpetual state of alarm, we turn out once, sometimes twice, every night; the officers and men are

harassed to death. . .I have not had the clothes off my back for a long time and generally spend the greater part of the night upon the bank of the river."¹⁷ Army headquarters was distant, inefficient and not too concerned with the rearguard: "I was left there with my regiment. . .thirty miles from headquarters. . .and I do not think I was ever once visited by the Commander-in-Chief."¹⁸ In 1839, reminiscing with the Earl of Stanhope, Wellington damned even more the command hierarchy in Flanders than he had while serving there. Stanhope offered: "Your regiment, Sir, was, I believe, left for a long while on the Waal without any order or direction?" Wellington replied:

"Yes, the headquarters were twenty five miles off. I was on the Waal, I think, from October to January, and during all that time I only saw once one general from the headquarters, which was old Sir David Dundas. . .We had letters from England, and I declare that those letters told us more of what was passing at headquarters than we learned from the headquarters themselves. . .The real reason I succeeded in my own campaigns is because I was always on the spot - I saw everything and did everything for myself."¹⁹

The British government recalled the Duke of York, as author of the military failure, and installed General Count Walmoden as his successor.²⁰ The Dutch campaigns of 1794-1795 provided few British heroes. They did, however, give Wesley his baptism of fire and exposed him to the ineffective and incompetent command structure of his country's military hierarchy and their ruinous policy of neglecting the welfare of the common soldier. Arthur would

never countenance, during his later commands, inadequate food and shelter, poor communications, no intelligence apparatus, inadequate transport and expending valuable and limited resources transporting officers' baggage. His Flanders service convinced Wesley that the regiments were sound but that British military leadership was not up to the task.²¹

As an academy for a future field marshal the Dutch campaign was invaluable. During it Wesley developed an ability to lead large formations, indicative of innate leadership abilities. Outnumbered at Boxtel, he employed the standard defense of volley fire but employed it so effectively that he won the battle, one of the few bright moments in an otherwise dismal campaign. That action and the success of his rearguard along the river Waal testify to a superior military mind. But the failures of the campaign impressed him as well. Wesley said it best himself: "Why - I learnt what one ought not to do, and that is always something."²²

CHAPTER 2

APPRENTICESHIP IN INDIA

Destination: India

Arthur Wesley returned to Britain, with his tired but largely unscathed regiment, in the early spring of 1795.¹ The abortive expedition to the Low Countries must surely have been a humbling experience, although the lieutenant colonel gained some experience of real value during that calamitous fiasco. With the burning of his violin, Arthur had turned his back on his youth and applied himself unsparingly to the profession that he now accepted as his destiny. He saw his military service as a contribution to the public good, an idea he held in high regard. He viewed his entire career, after Holland, as selfless service to his nation: he felt that he was ". . .retained for Life."² He had not merely endured his Dutch experience, he had "learnt what one ought not to do." After Holland, Wesley was a changed man, serious and dedicated. Many noticed the transformation and remarked about the perception and intellectual alacrity of the young veteran. William Pitt (the Younger) assessed the lieutenant colonel favorably:

I have never met any military officer with whom it is so satisfactory to converse. He states every difficulty before he undertakes any service, but none after he has undertaken it.³

Wesley reconstituted, refitted and rested the 33rd and by September, 1795, had assembled it at Portsmouth. The regiment was ordered to join Lieutenant General Sir Ralph Abercromby's expedition to the West Indies.⁴ This was not the best of news, as service in the Caribbean colonies was frequently lethal in the late eighteenth century, particularly from disease. For example, of the approximately 400 officers who took part in the capture of Martinique in 1794, 197 died. Of that group, 27 were battle casualties while the balance succumbed to various tropical diseases, principally malaria.⁵ Nevertheless, Wesley and the 33rd sailed in September only to be battered by a series of storms that scattered the fleet and forced them to return to the refuge of their home ports. The reorganized force departed again in December. Two months later they were again blown back to England to await the kinder weather of spring. In the interim, however, the 33rd received new orders that diverted them from Abercromby's force and detailed them for duty in India.

Even though Wesley had looked forward to service with Abercromby, the change in orders was an event of real fortune for the future field marshal. The difference between duty in the colonial Americas and the East Indies was, as Lady Longford aptly phrased it, the difference between entering "the white man's graveyard," and stepping "into the treasure-house of the Orient."⁶ Additionally, Wesley,

never of truly robust health, had suffered serious illness from the constant exposure to the harsh Dutch winter of the preceding year, 1794-95. Although he could not know it, Arthur's future was certainly much brighter because of the change in orders which gave him additional time to bolster his physical status as well as providing a less virulent destination. More importantly, India would be the classroom for a field marshal that the Atlantic colonies could never have been.

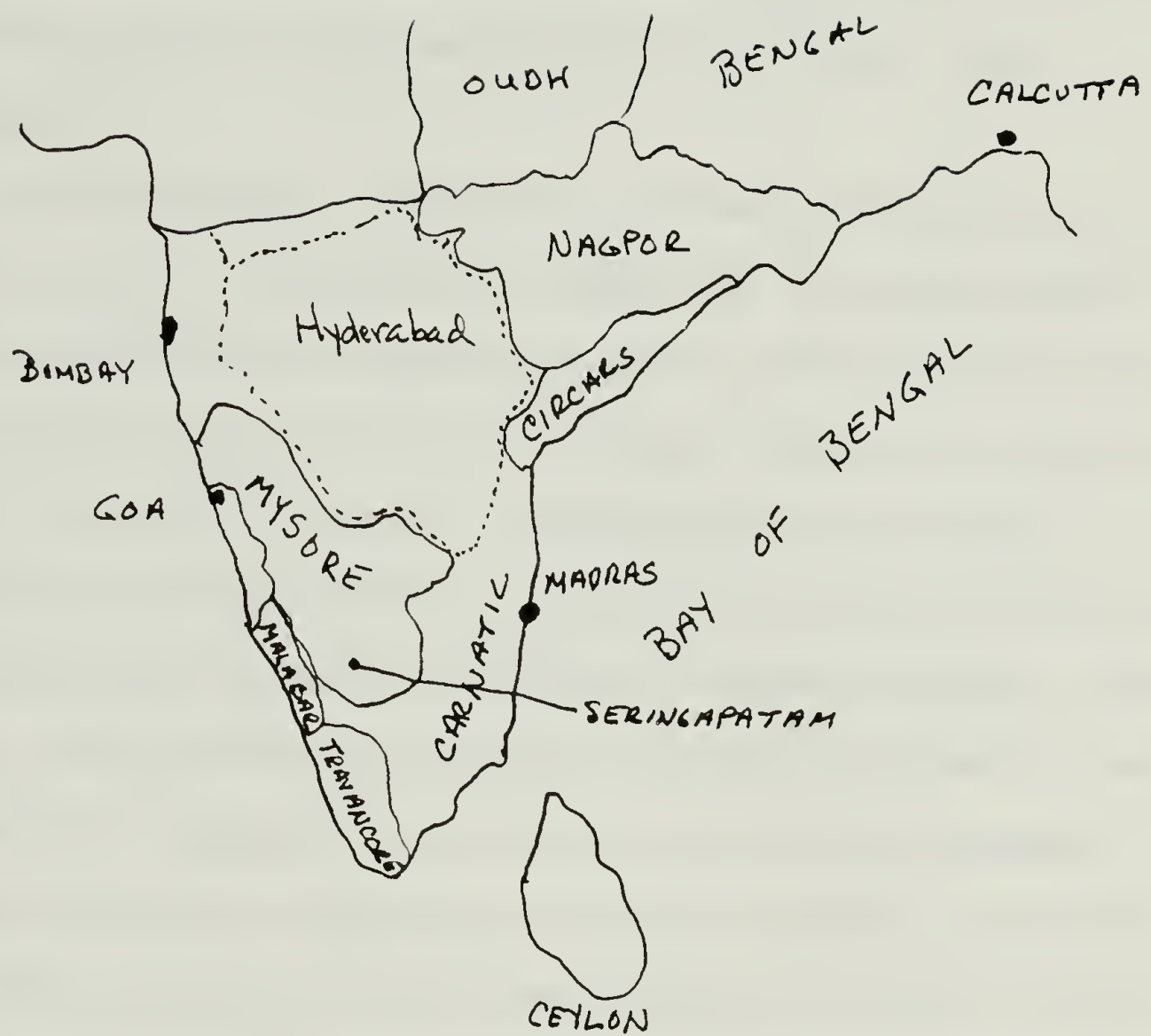
The reason for the 33rd's assignment to India was to reinforce the forces of the East India Company against possible (probable?) French activity there. As a result of the War of the Austrian Succession and, subsequently, the Seven Years War, France had lost much prestige and position in India. Treaty provisions had allowed the French to maintain small, unfortified trading ports but the French military presence had been largely eradicated. The new French republic had sharply repulsed the attack of the European monarchies that followed the Reign of Terror of 1794 and was now fully prepared to flex her imperial muscles again. Indeed, French activity in India, especially in Mysore, had been increasing for several years. Perceiving this threat, the East India Company requested reinforcement from London which, in turn, dispatched Wesley and his regiment, among others.⁷

Colonel Wesley arrived at Fort William, in Calcutta, the seat of the British governor general, in February 1797. During the voyage Arthur had received word of his brevet promotion to colonel. He had also become a student of India and advanced military science. That is, when Arthur finally accepted the military as a career (see page 7, above), he did it thoroughly, immersing himself in the details of his profession. He firmly believed that he could overcome the professional indolence of his early years and, by his own efforts, learn how to become a great commander. Before he departed England he had purchased a considerable personal library, not restricted to drill manuals. It included world and Indian atlases, histories of India and British adventures therein, primers on the languages of the subcontinent as well as works by Adam Smith, Voltaire, Rousseau and Frederick the Great.⁸

Physically rejuvenated and intellectually exercised upon arrival, Colonel Wesley made a very fine impression on Sir John Shore, the governor general: "If Colonel Wellesley [sic] should ever have the opportunity to distinguish himself, he will do it greatly."⁹ After their meeting, and at Sir John's insistence, the military planners at Fort William included Wesley in a fledgling plan to attack Manila. The East India Company was concerned that the presence of the Spanish, a French ally, in the Philippines constituted a threat to Company commerce and security and

had urged the attack on those grounds. It was clear that Sir John held Wesley in high regard; so much so that the colonel believed that he would be named commander of the expeditionary force: "Since my last an expedition to Manilla [sic] has been talked of, upon which I am to go, and I believe to have command of the corps furnished by this settlement."¹⁰ This letter, like the rest of Wesley's correspondence of spring, 1797, makes it clear that he was an ambitious man, anxious to do great things. In the event, the more senior Major General John St. Leger commanded the expedition, which included the disappointed Wesley, when it sailed in August 1797. The setback presaged what the colonel would often face in the future in India, a buffeting among the three forces of bureaucratic preference for his services, military seniority technicalities and his own belief that he could accomplish absolutely anything.¹¹

Once aboard the ships bound for Manila, Wesley continued his now-established practice of looking after the welfare of his troops, down to the smallest detail. Custom dictated that, while aboard, the ship's naval officers would have charge of the embarked soldiers. Freed of their charges, the army officers could retire to their cabins to endure the voyage as best they could. Wesley refused to adhere to that custom, taking it upon himself instead to attend to his regiment. Probably his position as a colonel



India

in a regular British unit (as opposed to a unit of the East India Company) as well as his favorable standing with Sir John permitted this unorthodox abrogation of custom.¹² The colonel particularly worried that the 33rd, trained to precision during their five months ashore, would be hopelessly out of condition when they reached Manila. For twenty of the previous twenty-seven months they had traveled as passengers on eighteenth-century British troop transports.¹³

Revolutionary, especially in the British army of 1797, were Wesley's "Regimental Orders for on Board Ship".¹⁴ They reflected the commander of the 33rd's effort to occupy his troops fully during the tedious voyage from Calcutta to Manila by way of Penang, a settlement on the Malay peninsula. The painstaking detail of the thirty-six dicta addressed such areas as physical fitness regimens, sleeping hours, guard duties, musketry practice and specific details of personal hygiene and ventilation of living spaces. Wesley mandated inspections and foul weather procedures, and he firmly controlled the distribution of spirit rations. As one would expect, when the 33rd disembarked during the layover in Penang it was fit and ready to conduct operations. To maintain that fitness the colonel did not let his soldiers idle their time away ashore. On the contrary, the 33rd began intensive parade and drill maneuvers to

compensate for the limited opportunities to do so on the voyage.

The actions of this young regimental commander during the voyage speak of an understanding and experience far beyond his years. The officer who prepared the thirty-six regimental orders of July 1797 was a demonstrably concerned and caring leader. It behooves every officer to preserve the fighting strength of his command but Wesley's style of leadership was certainly not characteristic of the army during this period. By his measures he brought much extra work upon himself and likely, because his measures required extra work for his regiment as well, provoked grumbling in the ranks and among his officers. Yet the net result far outweighed the cost because the 33rd was always healthy and combat ready. The colonel who dictated the regimental orders foreshadowed the field marshal who wrote his own rules within the context of service to the public good.

Portent of Greatness

Disappointment at the failed prospect of command of the Manila expedition was short-lived, because the governor general recalled the force before it reached its destination. At best of dubious conception, the expedition's departure left the East India Company in a perilously weak

defensive state, especially in view of the newly-resurgent French republic. Accordingly, while in Penang, the force received orders to return and it arrived in Calcutta in December 1797.

After situating his regiment in Bengal, with, of course, specific drilling and training instructions, Colonel Wesley, from January through March 1798, performed an extensive reconnaissance of the battlefields of southern India.¹⁵ He had studied India extensively during the voyage from Britain.¹⁶ He knew France and Britain had fought with each other on the subcontinent throughout much of the eighteenth century and that France was anxious to renew her claims there. In anticipation that the conflict might erupt again, he wished to see for himself the land he might soon have to traverse with an army.

The colonel focused his reconnaissance efforts on the Carnatic, Mysore and Hyderabad. Those south-central regions were the most probable locales for any future Anglo-French hostilities in India because of the ever-increasing French presence in Mysore. Anti-British sentiment ran high in Mysore as a result of General Cornwallis's* defeat of the Sultanate of Mysore under Tipoo Sultan in 1791-92.¹⁷ Tipoo had not accepted his defeat and subsequent territorial losses gracefully. He had not come to realize the benefits

*General Charles Cornwallis, second Earl and first Marquis Cornwallis.

of British suzerainty. Patiently biding his time before seeking revenge, he brought into his army French armaments and officers.¹⁸ By 1798 he possessed a formidable and hostile force officered in many cases by French professionals.¹⁹

Because of the potential volatility in Mysore, Wesley spent the preponderance of his reconnaissance there. British military endeavors in that region, while on the whole successful, had also seen reverses, notably the destruction of Colonel William Baillie's force of some 4,000 troops on 10 September 1780.²⁰ Wesley resolved to avoid repeating past errors. To that end he traced Cornwallis' successful march on Seringapatam, Tipoo's capital.²¹

Colonel Wesley made two significant determinations during his sojourn. First, he found that the established passes through the mountains to reach the tableland of Mysore, those most commonly traveled and that Cornwallis had used, were covered by potentially hostile fortifications. The colonel then discovered many other smaller, but nevertheless passable, secondary routes through the mountains which troops and cavalry could use. Cornwallis, without the luxury of advanced inspection of the area of operations, had not been aware of them, or if he had, had chosen to ignore them. Wesley would not.

Colonel Wesley also determined that considerable advantage would go to the British if their armies could

assemble and move through the Baramahal with impunity. Transit through Baramahal, an area between the Carnatic and Mysore, was unavoidable to any force bent on Seringapatam. The security of that region would eliminate the constant threat to the supply lines that had caused General Cornwallis to establish Bangalore as a satellite logistical base. Arthur believed that the quiescence of Baramahal, preferably by cooperation but forcibly if necessary, was essential to the success of any operation against the Mysorean capital.²²

Wesley's analysis, offering no more than one would expect of any competent staff officer today, was remarkable for its time. His very presence in Mysore indicated a keen analytical mind at work, the planning of a brilliant officer for future contingencies. He examined, in minute detail, the routes, terrain, forage and water supplies of the area. No one else, not even one of the several senior generals, had performed a similar reconnaissance or directed that one be completed. Of the future duke's penchant for tireless preparation, Colonel G.F. Henderson, a noted historian of the British army, wrote: "Do we always remember that it was by hard work, in peace as well as in war, by devotion to duty in its highest sense, by doing whatsoever his hand found to do with all his might. . . [that he distinguished himself]."²³

Preparation and First Action

A ship sailing up the Hooglie to Fort William, in Calcutta, in the spring of 1798 brought with it an important agent of imperial expansion in India, Arthur's older brother, Richard. The Earl of Mornington became the Governor-General of India in April.²⁴ Arthur had previously urged his brother to come to India, wishing to see him in the position of governor general. In July of 1797 he had reminded Richard of a previous letter that had asked him to "Look to the Government of this Country." The colonel had continued:

I am glad to find that there is so near a prospect of my wishes upon that subject being accomplished. I am convinced that you will retain your health; nay, it is possible that its general state may be mended; and you will have the fairest opportunities of rendering material services to the public, and of doing yourself credit, which, exclusive of other personal considerations should induce you to come out.²⁵

Now Mornington had come, bringing with him new direction for the British in India, and a new name as well, Wellesley, an older version of the family name. Mornington had resurrected it for some rather convoluted personal reasons.²⁶ Arthur cooperated with Richard's titular eccentricities and adopted the name. His first correspondence with Wellesley as his signature is in a letter of 19 May 1798, to S.R. Lushington, secretary to

Lieutenant General George Harris, the Commander in Chief and acting Governor of Fort George, the seat of the Madras presidency.²⁷

Mornington's goals were more ambitiously imperialist than those of his predecessors. As historian Jac Weller wrote: "Mornington may have come out with a master plan for expansion in the back of his mind."²⁸ A new breed of colonialist, Richard, like Arthur, believed public service a noble vocation, especially in a colony like India. He also believed it his duty to improve the lot of the Indians by instituting British administrative and government structures. Mornington (and Colonel Wellesley) thought that the Indians could only thrive under British rule, and he hoped to expand the boundaries of that rule.

An increased French presence in Mysore blocked that expansion. The Europe that the earl had just left was rife with French victories as the new republic had lashed out at the old monarchies that had tried to forcibly maintain the status quo of the *Ancien Regime*. In the ascendant, the armies of the republic, and their emerging genius, Napoleon, were the single strongest military power of continental Europe, a formidable instrument of the expansion-minded republic. France was reasserting a military presence in India and Tipoo's recent agreement with the French governor at Mauritius posed a serious threat to Mornington's plans. Tipoo's open hostility to the British made settlement, at

least on British terms, impossible. The earl entered into pro forma negotiations with Tipoo in 1798 only in order to buy time while he cemented alliances and built up forces for an attack on Mysore. The most important alliance would be with Hyderabad. It derived its political and strategic importance from its proximity to Mysore and from its large army which, like that of Mysore, was French-led.²⁹

Politically hostile because of years of poor treatment by the East India Company, the Nizam of Hyderabad preferred an alliance with the French.³⁰ Mornington's diplomatic maneuvers, called brilliant by some, resulted in the nizam coming instead to an accord with the British.³¹ A treaty between the Company and the nizam, signed on 1 September 1798, called for all French officers to be replaced by East India Company officers.³² Furthermore, the nizam agreed not only to enter into an accord with the British but also to ally with them against Tipoo.

Throughout the summer and autumn of that year, the Company concentrated ever greater numbers of troops in Madras. Colonel Wellesley and his regiment formed part of that buildup. The regiment embarked aboard the *Fitz-William*, in August. On the way from Calcutta to Madras the ship struck a reef and almost foundered. Fluky winds also delayed its progress so that the voyage required over three weeks. Worse, the drinking water aboard was contaminated, further shaking Wellesley's already poor opinion of military

provisioners. Most of the 33rd experienced some level of illness, generally dysentery, but several soldiers died. Wellesley thought it "very inconsistent with the principles of the Christian religion to give people bad water when [Captain Frazer] had notice of the probability that it would be so."³³ In spite of those difficulties, the 33rd arrived in Madras and Wellesley led his men from there to Vellore, the city on the Baramahal border that was the main staging area for the grouped battalions.

By the end of December 1798, a considerable force had assembled in and around Madras. When Arthur arrived, he contributed significantly to planning the move against Mysore. His experience gained during his reconnaissance and his reputation for tactical thought made him a valued contributor. The plan that finally emerged called for a two-pronged attack. General Harris would march against the Sultanate from the east while Lieutenant General James Stuart would come down from Bombay and strike from the west. The planners intended the forces to converge simultaneously on Seringapatam, Tipoo's capital and main citadel.

At this point someone else's tragedy turned into Wellesley's good fortune. Colonel Henry Harvey Ashton, the commander of the brigade of which Wellesley's 33rd formed a part, was killed in a duel in mid-December.³⁴ Wellesley and Ashton had worked together for months preparing the plans for the Mysore campaign and had held each other in

mutual high regard. The survivor deeply regretted his superior's death. Honored to receive Ashton's fine Arabian stallion, Diomed, as a bequeathal, Wellesley also took over the brigade.³⁵ "I have taken command of the troops.", he noted on 20 December.³⁶

As acting brigadier and the senior commander present (General Harris and his principal subordinate commanders had remained in Madras), Wellesley began organizing the mass of troops at Vellore. The task of assigning bivouac areas, guard responsibilities, and similar issues, was relatively easy to accomplish. Overcoming the logistical problems, however, presented much more of a challenge. The necessity of acquiring sufficient victuals, forage, supply and transport, long the bane of armies, had bedeviled Cornwallis during the campaign of 1791.³⁷ They now promised to make the campaign of 1799 a nightmare. Until relatively recently, most generals disdained the unglamorous world of logistics as not the business of officers and gentlemen. Wellesley was not like most generals. Always concerned for the welfare of his soldiers, at Vellore he would show how innovation and desire could overcome many of the problems imposed by logistical limitations. Obviously a mere colonel could not remake the army establishment or create an efficient commissary corps. He could, however, assess the problem and, with the benefit of his preparation, find a solution to it. Wellesley's knowledge of the history of British armies in

India and his recollection of the entrepreneurial nature of the merchants in the bazaars of Madras helped him greatly. Cornwallis had used the *brinjarries*, wholesale grain merchants, to transport rice for his force during his second march on Seringapatam in 1792.³⁸ Wellesley adopted that novel approach but modified it slightly in that instead of using the *brinjarries* as bearers of rice as Cornwallis had, he used them as purveyors, merchants of rice. This gave the *brinjarries* a vested interest in maintaining the security of the rice because they had a financial stake in it. Further, Wellesley lured groups of merchants and craftsmen from the bazaars of the cities to accompany the expeditionary force. This second group provided the army and the camp followers with goods and services of every description. Finally, Wellesley started a process of gradually hiring transport services, especially transport by bullocks, as they were the most adaptable to overland campaigns.³⁹ His preparations were thorough and complete. They also proved advantageous to the campaign because the *brinjarries* and bazaars, while adding to the mass that had to move cross country, cost the East India Company nothing. Not only did the merchants have a financial interest in the efficient and honest conduct of commerce but the bazaar merchants also provided services unheard of in a travelling army. As one Wellington scholar observed:

If and when the army advanced west, these bazaars would go too and at their own expense and

responsibility. This system of merchandising was as old as the East and more efficient than it seems to us. An Indian bazaar contained merchants who could supply rice, other grains and almost anything else. There were craftsmen capable of making a soup tureen from silver coin or repairing a fine pistol by adding a newly forged mainspring.⁴⁰

Colonel Wellesley's preparations during his two months as senior commander in Vellore put the army on a sound logistical footing.

General Harris, well pleased with the young brigade commander, told Mornington about Arthur's "masterly arrangements in respect to supplies."⁴¹ At the same time Harris assured Arthur's brother that he would like to praise Wellesley publicly (usually accomplished via published general orders) for his achievements at Vellore but was concerned that if he did so others might become ". . .displeased and jealous."⁴² Wellesley, himself, grew angry at General Harris' reticence. He felt that his position and achievement deserved public recognition, that he had done more than merely exploit advantages provided by his brother, the governor general. Prudently, the young colonel kept his anger in check except for a minor outburst in a letter to Richard:

The General expressed his approbation of what I had done, and adopted as his own all the orders and regulations I had made, and then said that he should mention his approbation publicly, only that he was afraid others would be displeased and jealous. One of these others, General Floyd,* had been in a similar situation with mine, but his army was starving: he had

*Major General James Floyd

been supplied from the public stores at Madras, Vellore, and Arnee, and latterly by me from my own camp.

As in fact there is nothing to be got from the army but credit, and as it is not always the best intentions and endeavors to serve the public succeed, it is hard that when they do succeed they should not receive the approbation which it is acknowledged by all they deserve. I was much hurt about it at the time, but I don't care now, and shall certainly continue to do everything to serve General Harris, and support his name and authority.⁴³

By late January 1799, the "unappreciative" Harris commanded a force of 32,000.⁴⁴ Half of it, however, was the nizam's army, which needed a firm but diplomatic liaison/leader if it was to operate in concert with the British. Colonel Ashton had earlier filled that role, combining the finesse needed to manage the personalities of another man's army with the necessity for solid, dependable service.⁴⁵ Now the duty fell to Wellesley, which occasioned an uproar of protest from more senior officers who believed themselves better qualified than the governor general's brother. Their discovery that Meer Allum, the nizam's son and field commander, had personally requested Wellesley, however, muted the protest.⁴⁶

On 3 February 1799, Harris' huge force, made all the larger by the camp following that included the brinjaries and the bazaars, began its westward movement. The "ponderous machine" carried with it most of the victuals required for human consumption even though it depended upon the countryside to provide the forage for its 15,000 horses and

over 100,000 bullocks.⁴⁷ It would obviously take a considerable supply of forage to sustain that many animals on the march to Seringapatam. Tipoo, of course, realized this British weakness. He had seen it before and learned from it. The sultan tried to destroy anything that could sustain the British in their march. He managed to lay waste only the countryside along the probable route of march, however, because he lacked the manpower to cover all the other routes into Mysore. This was the benefit Wellesley had foreseen in the control of Baramahal. Harris, by a series of radical and unpredictable turns, abandoned the shortest route, which Tipoo had rendered untenable, and moved his army through unspoiled land. Between Harris' maneuvers and Wellesley's grain (rice) stockage measures the force moved steadily, albeit circuitously, toward Seringapatam, as February gave way to March.⁴⁸

Wellesley first skirmished with Tipoo's troops on 10 March. As General Harris moved deeper into Mysore, enemy cavalry grew increasingly bold in harassing the British columns. On the 10th, Wellesley's advance guard encountered a column of 2,000 enemy cavalry. The acting brigadier sent forward two 6-pounders with the pickets. The grape from these field pieces rent huge holes in the Mysorean cavalry. Wellesley then led a cavalry charge that dispersed the remainder of the enemy column. In this first action his force suffered 57 casualties to Tipoo's 500 or so.⁴⁹

Harris' force continued to creep forward without meeting any significant opposition. But when on 26 March it entered an open plain six miles east of the settlement of Malavelley, it confronted a massive concentration of Tipoo's troops and artillery. Harris made camp and prepared to engage the sultan. Early the next morning the British force moved toward the enemy. Tipoo's artillery began firing. Harris, anxious to close with his foe, urged his men on. His main army was positioned on the right, Wellesley and the nizam's army on the left. He then ordered his acting brigadier to attack Tipoo's right and try to turn that flank. As the British columns struggled forward Tipoo sent an infantry column of between 2,000 and 3,000 to check the advance.⁵⁰ Now Tipoo would test the value of Wellesley's six years of drill and practice with the 33rd. Arthur ordered his regiment, the lead unit of the nizam's army, to move from column to line as they approached a low ridgeline. It executed the maneuver flawlessly, moving obliquely across the crest of the ridge until the men presented two long ranks of approximately 350 infantrymen each to the approaching enemy. The Company units that marched behind the 33rd duplicated the maneuver, falling in behind the redcoats. Tipoo's force, still in column, continued to close with the British, now stationary in line. The regulars watched their enemy approach until, at 60 yards Wellesley commanded: "Thirty-third, make ready! Fire!"⁵¹ The volley

of 700 British muskets shattered the leading Mysorean columns. The troops behind them could not continue the advance because the bodies of those killed by British volley fire impeded their forward progress. The 33rd, however, rose, presented bayonets and marched forward with the steady precision of the parade ground. The awesome spectacle of unbroken ranks of regulars coming straight at them with cold steel proved too much for the Mysoreans. They broke and ran.

Malavelley lives prominently in only two histories: one by General Harris and one by Wellesley. For General Harris it foreshadowed the successful outcome of a distinguished career. For Wellesley it was his first real battle, and, as it turned out, a defensive one. Wellesley's 700 musketeers faced and repulsed a force at least three times their number. To do so, their commander used the double-rank line formation utilizing disciplined and effective volley fire. The future field marshal seems to have possessed an instinct for brilliant defense, as Malavelley had just shown, and as the later efforts in Iberia would demonstrate. His defensive maneuver, however, did not accord with the preferred British tactic in India, the raid, a violent and unexpected attack, almost always against a foe with superior numbers.⁵² This tactic kept the Indian armies of the various princes, usually larger than those of the Company, from being concentrated and ready. The action could happen at any time and from almost any direction, necessitating the dispersal

of princely forces and effectively neutralizing their numerical superiority.

Wellesley had studied the tactics of the earlier campaigners and was familiar with these audacious attacks that seemed to work so well. He had observed that, once the raids disrupted the enemy, the British and Company troops usually carried the battle, inferiority of numbers notwithstanding, as a result of their martial ferocity. The lesson, for him then, was to capitalize on the disruption caused by the raid by establishing a defensive line. He demonstrated this hybrid of the raid at Malavelley. Usually the British had rushed toward the enemy in column, then waited until the enemy deployed before the redcoats formed line. Then, three files deep, they used volley musket fire and cannon to destroy the enemy formations.

Wellesley, however, deployed in line and awaited the enemy still coming forward in column, and chose to form two lines instead of three. The conventional wisdom of the later eighteenth century, in the armies of Great Britain, France and Prussia, dictated line formations with three ranks or files.⁵³ Two basic arguments favored the three-deep formation. First, generals feared that in the heat of battle, the first rank would suffer so many casualties that the second rank, standing alone, could not provide a sufficient volume of fire. Second, if the first rank was depleted too much, it would not be able to form an effective

square, the only sound defense against cavalry attacks since no horse would charge a sea of bayonets. Wellington had ignored the conventional wisdom because he had discovered that the British in India did not usually encounter the massive volumes of fire that they would face in Europe. Also, Wellesley's 33rd was an exceptionally well-led and disciplined unit. The best way to take care of your troops, he believed, was to prepare them properly for battle. Wellesley's exacting training regimen proved its worth at Malavelley. The 33rd delivered three to four rounds per minute against an enemy incapable of answering it.⁵⁴ As a result, he never needed to worry about forming square against a cavalry charge that never took place.

Malavelley is not listed in the regimental honors of the 33rd, but perhaps it should be. It was the place where the future Duke of Wellington applied his self-taught tactics, training and discipline to excellent effect. While he had been shot at in anger, he had never before led troops in battle save for the defensive rearguard action at Boxtel five years earlier. After Malavelley, Arthur could boast of having commanded 16,000 men in combat. Certainly it requires great skill to manage that number of soldiers, who spoke several different languages, in the chaos of battle with only the most rudimentary communication system. As a portent of future coalition generalship and coolness in combat, this action established the famous Wellington *modus operandi*.

A Sobering Reversal

Tipoo fell back to his fortified capital in the first days of April following the setback at Malavelley. General Harris' army plodded after him and, on 4 April 1799, made camp two miles south of Seringapatam.⁵⁵ Now they prepared to assault it. Wellesley had helped formulate the British plan of attack. It intended that the armies, which approached from the east, would bypass the city to the south and assemble in a fortified camp to the west. General Stuart's force, approaching from the west would continue straight toward the citadel and camp on the north bank of the Cauvery River (see map , page 39). Colonel Wellesley would situate the Nizam's army to the south and assume responsibility for pickets to the south and east. From these three camps the British would move against the city. They would not besiege it in the formal sense of the word, but would batter the walls and gates and follow with a rapid attack combining assault and escalade. Sieges in India were frequently of short duration because the brittle walls of the fortresses usually succumbed quickly to the heavy shot of the British siege guns, few as they might number.⁵⁶

Tipoo, anticipating Harris' plan, erected partial fortifications between the fortress and an aqueduct that meandered north toward the Cauvery and then south. Harris needed to clear the area, all the way to the South Cauvery

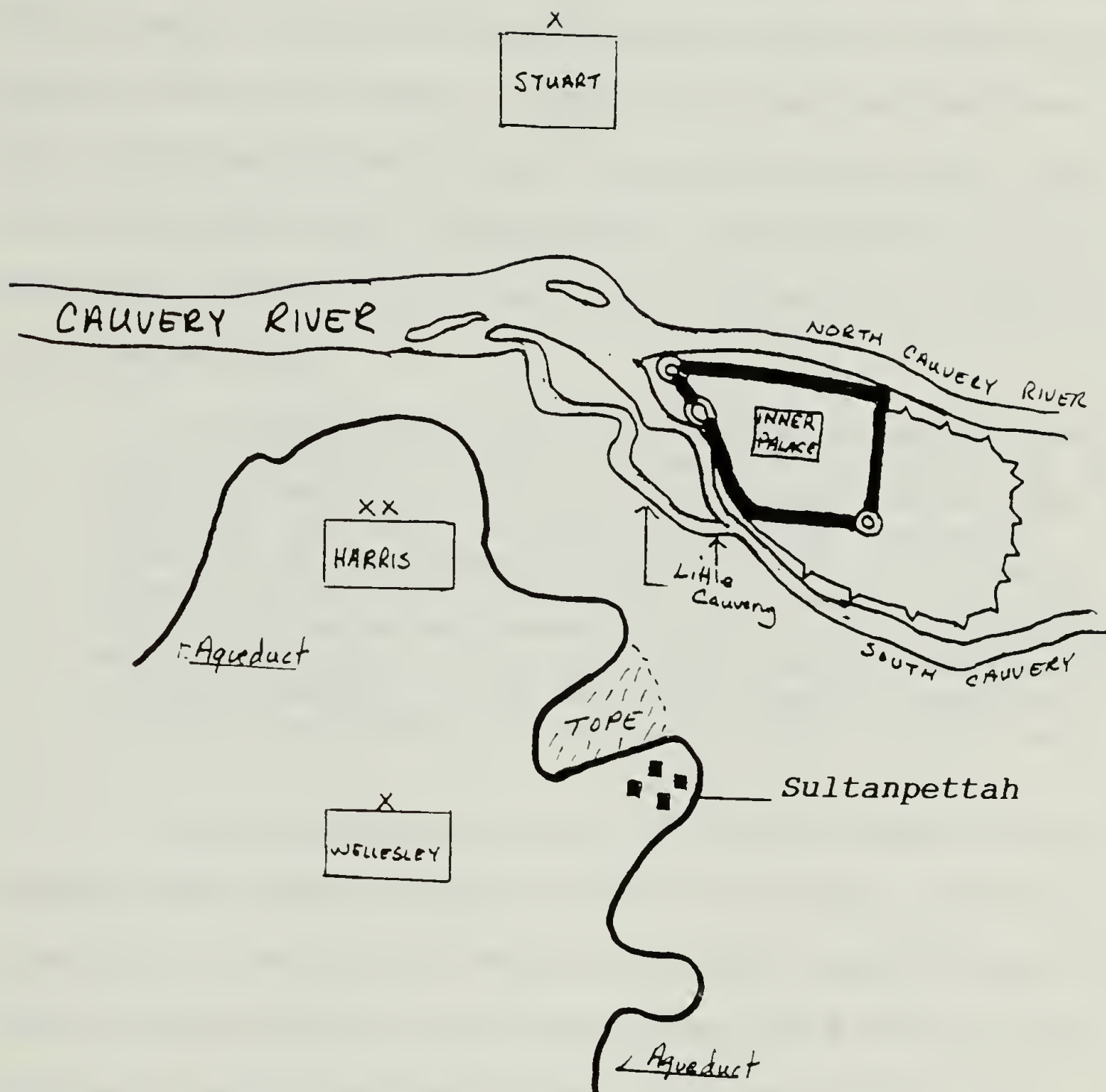
River, before he could assault the city. The British general planned to take the area up to the aqueduct first, and afterwards the zone between the aqueduct and the Little Cauvery. Because he lay closest to it, Wellesley had the job of clearing the Sultanpettah tope, a thicket of cocoa, bamboo and betel. Harris wanted this grove taken because it supposedly "had parties of men with arms assembling on it."⁵⁷ Concurrent with Wellesley's activity, a party would move out from the Harris camp to secure the northern end of the aqueduct. Both assaults would take place after dark.

Wellesley did not like the situation. He would have to approach a thicket which probably concealed a large force without having first reconnoitered it and without benefit of any intelligence concerning its strength. He recommended as an alternative, taking the ends of the aqueduct and pinching off the tope:

Upon looking at the Tope as I came in just now, it appears to me that when you get possession of the bank of the Nullah [watercourse of the aqueduct], you have the Tope as a matter of course, as the latter is in the rear of the former. However, you are the best judge, and I will be ready.⁵⁸

Wellesley's last statement, indicative of an obedient subordinate, sealed his fate. General Harris ordered the attack and, against his better judgment, Wellesley complied with the order.

As darkness settled in, Wellesley's force, with the 33rd in the van, moved forward over the elevated



Seringapatam

watercourse. The appearance of the redcoats startled the Indian pickets who hurried back into the tope. Then its defenders began showering their attackers with rockets, which they would continue to do sporadically throughout the inky black night. The darkness, the rocket attack, and the thick jungle confused the British who groped forward without knowing where they were or where the enemy awaited them. In the confusion, Wellesley lost touch with his units. Soon, discipline broke and, in disarray, the redcoats retreated piecemeal from the tope. Wellesley related the incident to his brother thus:

On the night of the 5th we made an attack upon the enemy's outposts, which, at least on my side, was not quite so successful as could have been wished. The fact was that the night was very dark, that the enemy expected us, and were strongly posted in an almost impenetrable jungle. We lost an officer killed, and others and some men wounded (of the 33rd); and at last, as I could not find out the post which it was desirable I should occupy, I was obliged to desist from the attack, the enemy also having retired from the post.⁵⁹

A visibly-upset Wellesley returned to General Harris' headquarters about midnight after he had done everything possible to recover his dead and wounded. Harris heard him out and noted later in his diary that the failure of the 33rd must have been "particularly unpleasant" for its colonel.⁶⁰

During this unfortunate affair, Wellesley had suffered 13 dead and eight men taken prisoner by the Mysoreans. The bodies of the prisoners were later found. They had been

tortured and killed, some by having nails driven through their skulls.⁶¹ Wellesley must have been shocked at this reversal. He knew every one of the 680 men in his regiment by name. He took full responsibility for the casualties, the prisoners and the failure. He wrote to the brother of a lieutenant killed in the bungled assault:

I can offer you no consolation upon this melancholy occasion. To inform you that your brother distinguished himself in the affair in which he lost his life; that in others, in which I have seen him engaged during this war, he had conducted himself to my satisfaction; that as an officer I had always, and particularly that I had latterly, reason to be pleased with him; will only add to the grief with which you and your family must naturally be affected.⁶²

The next day another unit took the tope. The city itself fell a month later, on 4 May. Wellesley came away from the affair sobered but not defeated. He resolved not to commit the same error again. "I have come to a determination," he said on 18 April, 1799, "when in my power, never to suffer an attack to be made by night upon an enemy who is prepared and strongly posted, and whose posts have not been reconnoitered by daylight."⁶³ Arthur would engage in few night actions thereafter. He would also be sure never to lose touch with his command, to let it wander aimlessly, as had happened at the tope. He had learned another valuable lesson, at a cost of 21 casualties.

Assaye

The fall of Seringapatam brought the Mysore campaign to a successful conclusion. After the city fell, Wellesley became governor of it and, shortly afterward, of the whole of Mysore.⁶⁴ During his tenure, he conducted a series of offensive operations against minor potentates which maintained peace in the interest of uninterrupted commerce: against Dhoondia Waugh, June through September 1800; the Rajah of Bullum, January and February 1802; actions to quell the rebellions in Wynaad, 1802; the Peshwa Campaign and the Mahratta War, February 1803 through June 1804.

This series of campaigns fully matured Wellesley as a brigade and division commander. The longer he remained in charge the more mobile and audacious his expeditions became. Although he did not enjoy the luxury of numerical superiority, he was never again repulsed as he had been at the Sultanpettah tope (he assiduously avoided unreconnoitered night actions).

The last of his operations against the Mahrattas in the Mahratta War offered him the chance to display to the fullest, his tactical genius in battle. His greatest victory came at Assaye, a battle of offensive maneuver, wherein the British, after a long day of marching, encountered a strong, stationary enemy force that far outnumbered the redcoats.

The Mahrattas were, after the destruction of Tipoo's

sultanate, the most powerful group in India.⁶⁵ Jealous of British success in Mysore, and the subsequent East India Company presence there, they began to feel themselves threatened. Unlike the Mysoreans, the Mahrattas were not united, although they shared a common dislike for the British. That dislike spawned a concomitant interest in securing French military assistance. When the leaders of the various Mahratta groups appealed to the French government for aid, the British believed they had to nip this threat to British suzerainty in the bud. The Mahratta war began.

Wellesley, now a major general, led an army of two divisions through the Mahratta territory from August through December 1803.⁶⁶ He commanded one of the divisions himself and entrusted the other to Lieutenant Colonel James Stevenson. Stevenson, a favored subordinate of long standing, was familiar with the Wellesley methods of operation. Throughout the spring and summer of 1803 the two division commanders had worked well, operating in parallel, and had enjoyed much success. On 21 September the two met at Budnapoor to consider future plans.

Their chief opponent, a Mahratta leader, Scindia, whom they believed encamped to their north near Borkardan, commanded a formidable army. His regular infantry, led by Europeans, probably numbered about 15,000.⁶⁷ He also had some 10,000 to 20,000 additional infantry, but these men were not officered by professionals and were less reliable

as soldiers than were the regulars. Scindia's cavalry numbered between 30,000 and 60,000. But since he concentrated on developing an infantry force he had neglected training his cavalry. Their numbers were impressive, but not their martial skills. In addition to this mass of at least 55,000 troops, Scindia also had a powerful, mobile field artillery detachment.⁶⁸

After meeting at Budnapoor, General Wellesley and Colonel Stevenson decided to split their force, a seemingly curious move. Since Wellesley's division probably numbered no more than 7,000 and Stevenson's was smaller still, they would defy the time-honored convention of never splitting one's force in the face of an enemy superior in numbers.⁶⁹ A few months later Wellesley explained the reasoning behind the separation:

We were desirous to engage the enemy at the same time, and settled on a plan accordingly for an attack on the morning of the 24th. We separated on the 22nd, he to march by the western, and I by the eastern road, round the hills between Budnapoor and Jalna: and I have to observe that this separation was necessary, -first, because both corps could not pass through the same defiles in one day; secondly, because it was to be apprehended, that if we left open one of the roads through the hills, the enemy might have passed to the southward, while we were going northward, and then the action would have been delayed, or probably avoided altogether.⁷⁰

Wellesley might not have separated his force, however, had he not possessed full confidence in his intelligence system which "reported the enemy to be at Borkerdun," and

in the reliable, albeit oftentimes overly cautious Colonel Stevenson.⁷¹



Approaches to Assaye

On the afternoon of 23 September, at Naulniah, the general discovered that he had approached the enemy's pickets. The Mahratta chief was not at Borkardan at all, but at Assaye! This news came as a shock. Wellesley had taken a chance and divided his force, and now he had encountered a vastly superior enemy while at only half strength. Should he wait for Stevenson in order to face Scindia at full strength or should he seize the moment and attack the enemy? The major general rode out to reconnoiter the area and determined that the Mahrattas seemed certainly as surprised as he. Evidently they had not expected his approach and had no idea of his intentions. Now they were hastily breaking camp and trying to form in an effort to repulse the British.

Wellesley decided quickly to attack without waiting for Stevenson. He had an opportunity to catch Scindia off guard which might never happen again. "I therefore," he later commented, "determined to make the attack."⁷² Wellesley was sure that surprise would negate numerical superiority.

How should he attack? Scindia had chosen his position well. To his immediate north, on the Juah River, a tributary of the Kaitna River, stood the fortress of Assaye. Of mud and masonry construction, the fort could not support artillery on its ramparts. But Scindia had ringed it with artillery, rendering it very dangerous indeed to any attacker. He had deployed his regular units in tandem, with his other infantry, along the banks of the Kaitna, south and west of Assaye. This stream had banks so steep no carriages could cross except at its fords. The Mahratta cavalry he had stationed far to his right, or west, in a position that would allow them to envelop a stalled foe or pursue a fleeing enemy. The river and the fortress together provided Scindia with an excellent defensive position. Wellesley's Indian informants, furthermore, insisted that the only viable fords over the Kaitna were at Kodully and Taunklee, both to the immediate front of Scindia's position and well within the range of the withering fire of the Mahratta artillery.

Riding along the Kaitna from west to east, in sight of the enemy force, Wellesley continued his reconnaissance. As

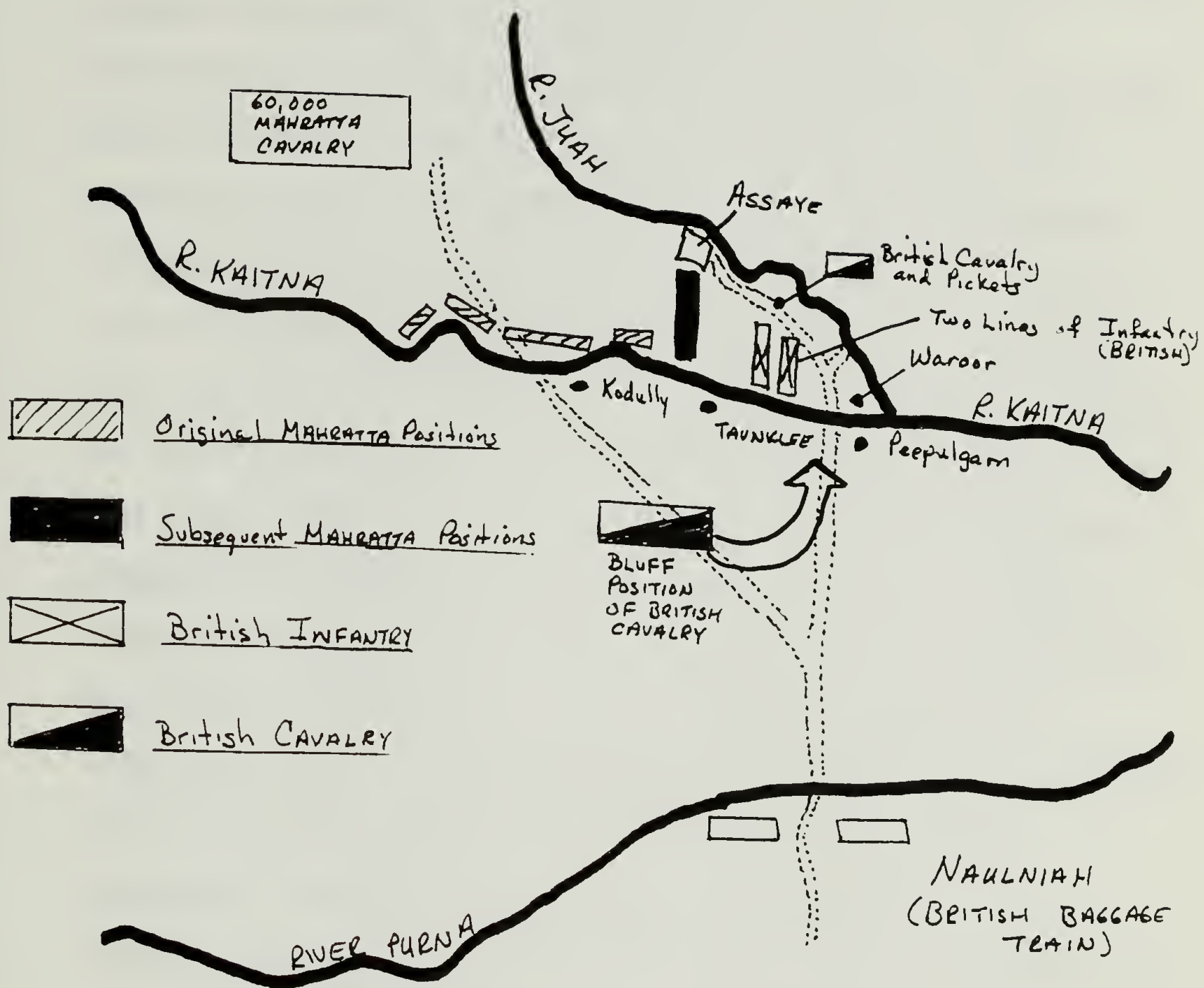
a result of this inspection he believed he now had found a third ford, unguarded by the Mahrattas, connecting the village of Peepulgaon on the south bank to that of Waroor on the north. Waroor lay to the left, or west, of where the Juah joined the Kaitna, and to the right, or east, of Scindia's prepared positions. The general's hicarrahs, brahmins he used as guides and spies, denied any such ford existed.⁷³ Despite their protests, "I immediately said to myself," Wellesley later recalled, "that men could not have built two villages so close to one another . . . without some habitual means of communication."⁷⁴ He therefore decided to move across the ford he thought had to exist and hit the enemy in the left flank and rear.⁷⁵ Once across, although outnumbered at least eight to one, he could cause Scindia to abandon his prepared positions. The Mahratta leader would have to shift his entire force to his left to face Wellesley's attack from the east. Surprised, and crowded between the river and the fort, the Mahrattas might not even be able to pivot to meet the British, in which case Wellesley could roll up the enemy flank. The success of the entire plan, however, rested upon the existence of a ford his best intelligence denied existed. When asked, much, much later why he would wager so much on a hope rather than a certainty, the now duke replied: "That is common sense. And when one is strongly intent on an object, common sense will usually direct one to the right means."⁷⁶

Common sense, and his own reconnaissance in this instance, brought him to the right means, for the ford lay exactly where he had thought that it should. Enduring an intense Mahratta artillery barrage, the redcoats crossed the Kaitna with their own guns. Most of Wellesley's cavalry, however, only 800 in number under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Maxwell, remained drawn up in line on the south bank of the Kaitna. Strange as it may seem, these 800 so intimidated the 30,000 to 60,000 Mahratta cavalry that they failed to move to support their infantry. Wellesley had anticipated that result, but the supposition was a risky one. The British horse by their presence not only denied Scindia half his force, they also shielded the first part of the infantry crossing the river from the Mahrattas.⁷⁷ Wellesley only ordered Maxwell across after the infantry began to assemble on the north bank, leaving a small contingent of horsemen in place to cover the southern bank.

Once on the north side of the Kaitna, the British infantry drew up in line, again in the two files Wellesley favored. The recently-arrived cavalry formed a separate third line, available to shore up any weakness or exploit an opportunity. When completely formed, the redcoat line stretched from the banks of the Kaitna, up the narrow tongue of land formed by the confluence of the Juah and Kaitna, to the banks of the Juah. Wellesley's army now stood in line, about a mile long, facing west with both flanks protected by

the rivers. Their looming presence necessarily forced the Mahrattas to scramble out of their secure, prepared positions along the Kaitna and reform in a new line facing east to meet their foes. They managed to do so quickly (thanks to their European officers) if inelegantly, anchoring their left at Assaye to the north and their right on the Kaitna to the south. The Mahratta artillery commenced a voluminous, deadly barrage that began to tear holes in the thin British lines. Wellesley had fooled his enemy and forced him to move out of almost impregnable defenses into a hasty, unanticipated formation. But the British general was still vastly outnumbered and outgunned. He now had to either attack or risk slaughter in place.

He attacked. He pushed his center and left forward against the enemy, hoping to force them back and up from the Kaitna to the Juah, at which time he believed Assaye would give up. He did not want his right, however, to attack the fort. Its cannon could rip to pieces any assaulting units. All the British right needed to do was hold its position until the center and left had pushed Scindia back to the Juah. Then they could accept the fort's surrender. Wellesley recognized the potential for disaster should his right come under fire from Assaye. To prevent that eventuality he conferred with Lieutenant Colonel William Orrock, the commander of the unit farthest to the right of the British line, and proscribed any movement to the north. Wellesley



Assaye

told Colonel Orrock "to keep out of shot from that village. . . ." ⁷⁸ The British commander then ordered the advance. The disciplined Company forces moved forward steadily under what Wellesley called "a very hot fire from cannon, the execution of which was terrible." ⁷⁹ He personally led the 78th Foot who would attempt to oust the enemy from their key position along the Kaitna as they "advanced rapidly and in good order." ⁸⁰ The battle that followed grew ferocious and deadly. The Mahratta infantry held on grimly until the British overran their artillery. Only then did they begin to give way. But retreat they did, and the Company seemed on the verge of total victory. In the north, however, the pickets and the 74th infantry had stumbled to the right into the withering fire of Assaye, a situation Wellesley had from the first dreaded and which he had tried to prevent. ⁸¹ Colonel Maxwell, of his own volition, led a cavalry charge that rescued the survivors of the 74th, although few of Colonel Orrock's pickets survived. ⁸² Despite this tragedy, Wellesley's tactic of turning the Mahratta line like a gate from the Kaitna up to the Juah worked. The British took Assaye and sent the Mahrattas fleeing pellmell. The victory at Assaye was a stunning tactical success.

Its cost, however, was horrendous. The Indians endured some 1200 killed and 4800 wounded, which in terms of their beginning strength of at least 55,000, amounts to relatively

light casualties. The British, on the other hand entered the battle with about 7,000 troops and suffered 428 killed and 1,156 wounded.⁸³ The British commander bemoaned the damage. "I acknowledge," he said, "that I should not like to see again such loss as I sustained on the 23rd September, even if attended by such a gain."⁸⁴ The majority of those casualties need never have occurred, and would not have if Orrock had obeyed orders. They were suffered by his pickets and the 74th who followed.⁸⁵

Assaye was notable for its risk and its daring and offensive spirit. Major General Wellesley knew the quality of his own troops and he knew his enemy. Convinced that the Mahrattas would shrink from the disciplined and orderly attack of His Majesty's and John Company's regiments, Wellesley pushed on against the vastly stronger Scindia. The relentless advance of the redcoats in the face of brutal artillery fire must have unnerved the Mahrattas. Wellesley's tactical plan was chancy but sound, considering his enemy and the alternatives available to the redcoats. Had he turned away from Scindia, the Mahrattas would surely have pursued him. Nor could he have afforded to wait for Stevenson. And even had Stevenson arrived, he could not have helped much, crowded as he would have been into the abbreviated battlefield at Assaye. Finally, using his superior discipline and quite unorthodox tactics, Wellesley maneuvered his force from a vulnerable position to one of

far greater advantage. By so doing, he negated the advantage Scindia had previously enjoyed. Indeed, when asked later what was the best fighting he ever did, the Duke replied, "Assaye."⁸⁶

Journeyman General

Arthur Wesley arrived in India as a twenty-eight year old colonel with little military experience and no military education. When Arthur Wellesley left for England in 1805, he was a major general and a Knight of the Bath. His series of successful campaigns had earned him his promotion. He had demonstrated talent, dedication and intelligence. Contrary to the perceived image, he was not a strictly defensive general. His mind ran decidedly in favor of the offense, even in the face of vastly superior numbers. In India he had displayed a talent for maneuver and an expert's eye for the battlefield. He had seemed to develop a sense for how each engagement would unfold.

How much had he learned in India that could serve him well in the future? He would not again attack at night an unreconnoitered position. Constant battle had honed his skills as a tactician, and he had learned to maneuver relatively large numbers of men in the field. He had learned how to feed and supply an army, in the process acquiring a

well-deserved suspicion of commissaries.⁸⁷ He had learned to oversee, personally, arrangements for provisioning armies. In India he had first used local dealers as both the sellers and the guardians of their goods, a system that had transferred the responsibility for the security and transport of the goods from the army to the merchant. In India Wellesley had witnessed the animosity that arose from civilians who saw their property appropriated without recompense. He had instituted a payment system that would become standard procedure in Iberia.⁸⁸ In India Wellesley had come to recognize the importance of adequate transport. While he was never able to secure it there to his satisfaction, he planned for it before each campaign, not during it.⁸⁹ As in India, Wellesley would fight in Iberia over some cart tracks that could barely accommodate pedestrians. His prior experience with the difficulties of transport over inhospitable terrain would prove invaluable. India had taught him much.

It had not taught him, however, the difficult art of siegecraft or the proper use of artillery. In the subcontinent the British never had to undertake the grinding sieges that destroyed cities, people and morale, as they did in Europe. Wellesley had engaged in a number of siege operations: Seringapatam (1799); Ahmednuggur (1803); and Gawilghur (1803). But they were against Indian forts of such poor quality in their construction that they often could not

mount cannon in their defense, and with walls so low that attackers could scale them easily.⁹⁰ The British could often end a siege victoriously shortly after they began it. Wellesley never faced the type of fortress he would encounter in Spain, such as the Vaubanesque citadel of Badajoz, with its high walls, trench, glacis, and outer works, defended by formidable artillery batteries. India tested his skills on the battlefield, but in no way prepared him for the complexities and dangers of European-style siege warfare. Indeed, India may have given him the disastrously-wrong impression that all siege warfare would resemble what he had experienced.

He had used artillery in India, but only incidentally. From the mid-eighteenth century through Viet Nam, artillery has been the single greatest killer on the battlefield. Yet Wellesley in India seemed to know only that he needed cannons, which he may even have considered an inconvenience, because they were so heavy and difficult to transport.⁹¹ Ironically, he would work tirelessly to transport his artillery and then seem, many times, to employ his guns only as an afterthought. Perhaps the superb qualities displayed by British or British-trained infantry against the footsoldiers of Indian princes caused him to downgrade the importance of the big guns. Perhaps the fact that the artillery moved so slowly that it could not keep up with his infantry in rapid marches and maneuvers in India led him to

neglect it.⁹² Whatever the case, he would have to learn in Spain what he had failed to learn in India, how to integrate artillery with infantry and cavalry to form a coherent and complete fighting army.

Thus when Major General Sir Arthur Wellesley, K.B., left India in 1805, he left with a well-deserved reputation as a man who could supply, administer, and lead to victory in the field large numbers of British and John Company soldiers. But because he had not learned much about siegecraft or the proper uses of artillery, he left India as, at best, a journeyman general.

CHAPTER 3

MASTER OF THE DEFENSE

From India to Iberia

Sir Arthur's Indian exploits ended in March, 1805. He returned to England in September to find that both he and his successes were all but unknown outside military and political circles. With Napoleon running roughshod all over Europe and threatening Britain with invasion, the ancillary theater of India held little interest for the public at large. Immediately after his arrival, Wellesley directed his energies primarily toward the exoneration of his older brother, Richard, whom the East India Company had sacked. Richard's efforts to expand British presence and hegemony in India, a program avidly supported by Arthur, was ahead of its time in the imperial scheme of things. Richard's tenure as governor general witnessed protracted fighting throughout the country. The East India Company, weary of the human, financial and diplomatic expense, replaced Mornington with Lord Cornwallis, the paragon of dependable stability.

After Richard returned to England, Sir Arthur set about his own business. The major general had political relationships of his own to nurture. Pitt had held Wellesley in very high regard and continued to do so. They rode

together one day from Wimbledon to London, "very slowly," as Arthur wrote to his brother:

and I had a full opportunity of discussing with him and explaining all the points of our late system in India , to which objections had been made, which were likely to make any impression upon him. . . Upon all of these his mind appeared satisfied.¹

Wellesley was anxious to enter the on-going war on the continent against Napoleon, and, to that end, he secured an assignment as brigade commander in an expedition intended for the Elbe in December, 1805. Fortunately, the British government canceled that mission before the troops could be committed, because of Bonaparte's seeming invincibility, especially after the French victories over the Austrians earlier in October, and the more recent annihilation of the Russians at Austerlitz.² The government then managed to find for Sir Arthur only an insignificant brigade command in Hastings. Command of a mere brigade in garrison, after India, would certainly have offended most military officers, a group not renowned for their humility, but not Wellesley:

I am nim muk wallah, as we say in the East, that is, I have eaten of the King's salt, and, therefore, I conceive it to be my duty to serve with unhesitating zeal and cheerfulness, when and wherever the King or his Government may think proper to employ me.³

The government found him more proper employment in very short order. From July until September 1807, Sir Arthur played an important role in the British expedition to Denmark.⁴ Although largely a naval operation, the

expedition included army units sent to capture the Danish capital city from the landward side as the ships blockaded the port. Wellesley led a force that screened the British attack on the city and prevented the Danish regulars from interfering with it. The Danish experience marked the future field marshal's first encounter with a European force since the debacle in Flanders twelve years earlier. He performed well, deflecting several Danish attempts to pierce his screen and thereby helped to facilitate the rapid capitulation of the city.

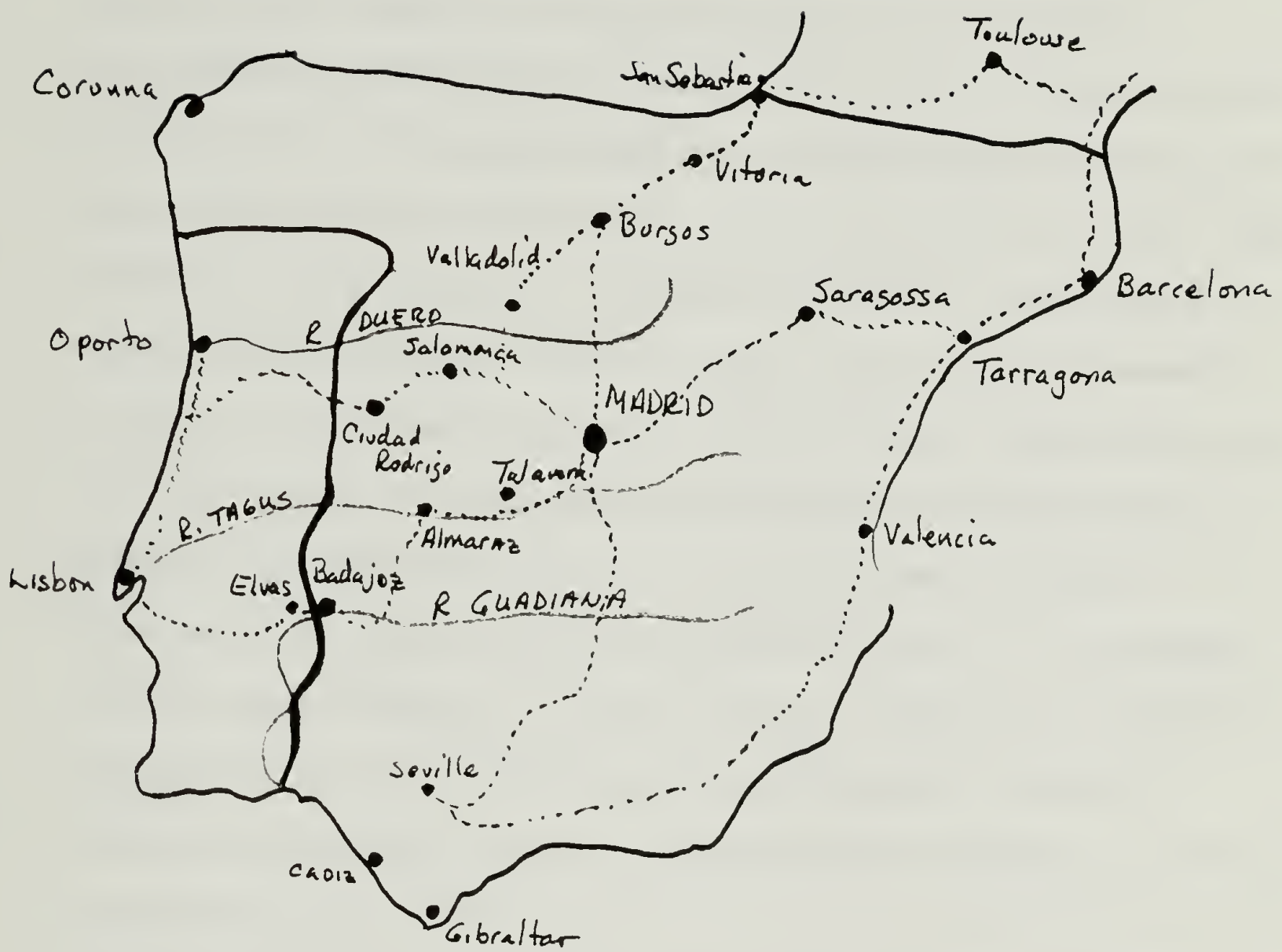
Wellesley returned to England in the autumn of 1807, a much-lauded man. The next April, the government promoted him to lieutenant general, the youngest officer of that rank in the army.⁵ By this time, Napoleon had created a vassal state in Spain by deposing the popular Spanish king, Ferdinand, and installing his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, on that throne. Napoleon's arbitrary action had so angered the people of Spain that they had risen up in revolt.⁶ Both Spain and Portugal, the most likely future target of Bonapartist expansion, pleaded to London for help in the summer of 1808. The British government responded favorably. It raised a 9,000 man expeditionary force destined for Portugal and designated Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Wellesley as commander.⁷

Sir Arthur had been long anxious to face the near-legendary Bonaparte. As his departure neared he remarked:

"My die is cast." He seemed on the verge of realizing his destiny:

. . .they may overwhelm me, but I don't think they will out manoeuvre me. First, because I am not afraid of them, as everybody else seems to be; and secondly because if what I hear of their system of manoeuvre is true, I think it is a false one as against steady troops. I suspect all the continental armies were more than half beaten before the battle was begun - I, at least, will not be frightened beforehand.⁸

That short passage supplies a beautifully succinct insight into Wellesley's military thinking in 1808. First, he remained convinced that his troops, steady through discipline, could overcome French superiority of numbers (which the French would maintain in the peninsula until 1813). Second, he recognized the flaws inherent in French infantry tactics. The French usually attacked in a column formation or a combination of line and column that the French termed the *ordre mixte*. Sir Arthur rightly believed that the highly disciplined two-deep line, bringing far more muskets to bear on the attackers than could be leveled at the redcoats at one time, could defeat the Imperial armies despite their brilliant record against the other continental forces. Finally, the future field marshal displayed supreme confidence in his own abilities. Perhaps no quality is more valuable in a general because it is both highly visible and contagious. It can turn possible fear and apprehension in subordinates into an unquenchable thirst for victory.



Iberia

The Peninsular War, 1808-1814

Sir Arthur's force arrived in Portugal, at Oporto, on 1 August 1808. Wellesley assembled his men and moved south to engage the French, who were trying to capture Lisbon. He defeated the French at Vimiero, only to find himself superseded by two senior generals, Sir Harry Burrard and Sir Hew Dalrymple. The most charitable description one can give these two officers is to call them cautious to a fault. They ordered him to sign the Convention of Cintra, the terms of which allowed General Andoche Junot, the French commander, to quit the battlefield and retreat to Spain unmolested. The convention and its consequences disgusted Wellesley and raised a furor in Britain. William Wordsworth wrote disparagingly that the British generals had ". . . changed. . . triumph into defeat."⁹ But a court of inquiry in England exonerated the lieutenant general completely, and he returned to Portugal as the unquestioned commander in chief in the spring of 1809.

Wellesley immediately organized his forces for an incursion into Spain. The war was unpopular on the home-front and the government was eager for a quick victory. Named, on 6 July 1809 Marshal-General of the Portuguese army, he assigned one of his most dependable lieutenants, General Sir William Carr Beresford, to train and lead that force. Sir Arthur, in the meanwhile, ventured into Spain

along the Tagus River valley and won a masterful defensive victory over the imperial army at Talavera, with (or rather, in spite of) his Spanish allies. The smashing victory at Talavera boosted the morale of the allied armies hugely and shored up support in Britain for the war effort. It also prompted the government to raise Wellesley to the peerage as Viscount Wellington and Baron Duoro.

Lord Wellington now found it increasingly difficult to work with the often imperious and always obstinate Spanish. "I find Cuesta [General Gregorio Garcia de la Cuesta, the commander of the Spanish at Talavera] more and more impractical everyday," wrote the lieutenant general. "It is impossible to do business with him and very uncertain that any operation will succeed in which he has any concern."¹⁰ Furthermore, following Talavera the Anglo-Portuguese army lay in mortal danger of being isolated from their lines of communication to Lisbon by interposing French armies. Communication and cooperation between the Spanish and the Anglo-Portuguese deteriorated to a point where the British commander-in-chief, exasperated, retreated to Portugal leaving the Spanish to their own devices. According to one historian of the Peninsular War, General Sir William Napier:

The departure of the English army from Spain was a remarkable epoch in the Peninsular War. The policy of combining operations, and of striking directly at the great masses of the French had been acted upon and failed; the long cherished delusion relative to Spanish enthusiasm and Spanish efficiency

was thus dissipated. . . .from this moment to the end of the struggle Wellesley [sic] warred indeed for Spain and in Spain, never in conjunction with Spain. "I have fished in many troubled waters, but Spanish troubled waters I will never try again," was his expression when speaking of this campaign and he kept his word.¹¹

The British retreat into Portugal, did, however, bring some advantages with it. Wellington had always considered Portugal defensible, even against the apparently formidable French superiority of numbers.¹² To ensure the safety of that haven, in September 1809 the future duke had ordered the preparation of a series of defenses near Lisbon, into which he could retire his army should the French threaten to overwhelm the allies. Kept completely hidden from the imperial armies, the defenses, known as the Lines of Torres Vedras, were completed in time for the British to fall behind them in the winter of 1810, just as a French force threatened to destroy them. The Napoleonic army instead had to quit Portugal, frustrated that the British were safe behind the Lines.

Following the stand at Torres Vedras the Anglo-Portuguese army prepared to take the offensive. Wellington had received significant reinforcements and General Beresford had transformed the Portuguese into a cohesive and disciplined force. The offensive, however, turned into a siege campaign. The two eastern 'doors' between Portugal and Spain were guarded by very strong fortresses. In the south they were Elvas on the Portuguese side and Badajoz on the Spanish side, and in the north, Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo,

respectively. In 1811 the French controlled Almeida, Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. To campaign effectively in western Spain, Wellington had to make sure the doors remained open by taking control of the citadels which Lady Longford so appropriately calls 'the keys to Spain'. He depended upon support from Lisbon, to which British ships brought the supplies for the expeditionary force. An enemy in control of those forts could sally forth to cut the British supply lines. During 1812, at great human cost, Britain won control of all three. Following the capture of Badajoz, the last to fall, Wellington made for Salamanca and fought a stupendous battle, completely routing the French force of Marshal Auguste Marmont. The British followed that victory with a triumphant entry into Madrid.

Then the future duke committed a strategic error. He tried to capture the heavily-fortified citadel at Burgos. The French armies, scattered after Salamanca, quickly reassembled. They not only chased the British away from Burgos, but sent them reeling all the way back to the safety of Portugal. That setback proved only temporary. In 1813 Wellington pushed the French all the way to the Pyrenees, winning a stunning victory at Vitoria on 21 June, for which he was created field marshal, the first person in the history of the British army to receive a baton as a symbol that high rank.¹³ He continued his advance, bringing the Peninsular War to an end with a victory at the battle of

Toulouse on 10 April 1814. Ironically, Toulouse was contested four days after Napoleon's abdication (which brought little consolation to the 1600 Anglo-French casualties of that battle). Field Marshal the Marquess Wellington became the Duke of Wellington on 3 May 1814.¹⁴

The Peninsular War thus consisted of three distinct phases. The first was the defense of Portugal, necessitated by overwhelming French superiority of numbers (in part owing to a lack of reinforcements from Britain), lack of money for local procurement and purchase, and, not least, a bare trickle of resupply from Britain. The second phase involved siegecraft. Conduct of campaigns far from the home base of Lisbon required the security of uninterrupted lines of communication and supply. In order to provide that security, Wellington had to control the frontier fortresses. The third phase witnessed the two-year offensive that swept the French back across the Pyrenees.

The Defense: The Better Part of Valor

Wellesley's task in the spring of 1809 was not to defeat the imperial French armies in Iberia but, rather, to avoid being beaten. Simply put, he must hold off the French. The Iberian portion of Napoleon's Grande Armée was indeed formidable, exceeding 300,000 troops.¹⁵ The British forces

in the peninsula numbered barely 20,000.¹⁶ Even the combined Anglo-Portuguese army had less than one sixth of the men of imperial French army. The French enjoyed the strategic and logistic luxury of interior lines even though guerrillas threatened those lines more and more as the campaign progressed. Conversely, Sir Arthur's supply lines stretched back to England from whence little came until 1811. Britain did not, at first, wholly commit itself to the war in Spain, and that lack of commitment resulted in generally sporadic and always insufficient financing and resupply. Reinforcements barely trickled in before 1812.¹⁷ The allied army, furthermore, was allied in name only. The well-trained British regulars formed the core of the army. But the Portuguese troops required many months of drill with a contingent of British cadre to become a sturdy and dependable force. To their credit, at Talavera they performed very well, Sir Arthur having positioned them so they needed to maneuver very little.¹⁸ One could certainly, after Talavera, if not before, describe Wellesley's force as an Anglo-Portuguese one. The same did not apply with the Spanish. They were grateful for British assistance but believed that the redcoats should bow themselves to the authority of the Spanish *Junta*. The British served, after all, in Spain.¹⁹

Into this situation came a general who had hitherto won his victories by attacking his foes in battle. Before he

left for Portugal the future field marshal had studied not only the tactical doctrines of the British army, but also those of Prussia, Russia and France. Additionally, Sir Arthur had followed closely the progress of Napoleon and understood the Frenchman's tactics. Although Wellesley's confidence in himself and his army remained unshaken, he became, by force of circumstance, more cautious. "I could lick these fellows any day," he remarked in 1810, "but it would cost me 10,000 men, and as this is the last army England has, we must take care of it."²⁰ Circumstances required the young lieutenant general to become a defensive commander. As India had schooled him in practicing the intricacies of the offense, the first years in Iberia would serve him similarly for the defense. He seems to have possessed an uncanny knack for this type of combat. In India he had worked hard to learn to judge the lay of the ground and how to use terrain to enhance his tactical employments. The knowledge he had acquired there he turned to its greatest advantage against the daunting Napoleonic armies.

As a result of his studies and his contact with the French he formulated a threefold strategy for defeating them. First, he would protect his infantry for so long as possible. Without any favorable terrain to shelter them, he could order them, at least, to lie flat on the ground. But the future duke usually chose where to give battle, and he usually chose a position in which the topography favored

him, atop hills and ridges. There he could position his men on the reverse slope of hills, out of the line of fire.²¹ If he found himself caught on the forward slope of a rise, he would keep the infantry out of musket range until the skirmishers and artillery, placed well forward, stood in peril of being overwhelmed. Stationing his infantry thus made them largely invisible to the opposing general, preventing the enemy from determining troop dispositions. It also minimized the toll French artillery - which they habitually used to bombard an enemy preparatory to their assaults - would take on the infantry. Not knowing Wellesley's troop dispositions or having any idea of the effect of his artillery on the British, a French commander could not focus his attack or even know the strength or type of the British forces he faced. As a result, time and again the French would attack, always uphill, a force of unknown strength and disposition.

To ensure their ignorance, he developed a second tactic. He would deploy light infantry skirmishers - in no actual formation - to disrupt the first enemy attackers to appear. These skirmishers, often as much as a third of his infantry, would engage the French skirmishers, or *tirailleurs*. The French had used them throughout Europe with great success, as Wellesley knew because of his studies and observations. If his own skirmishers could deflect the

French ones, the *tirailleurs* would not be able to probe his lines and detect his strengths and weaknesses, particularly the position of the majority of his infantry, lying in wait for a major assault.

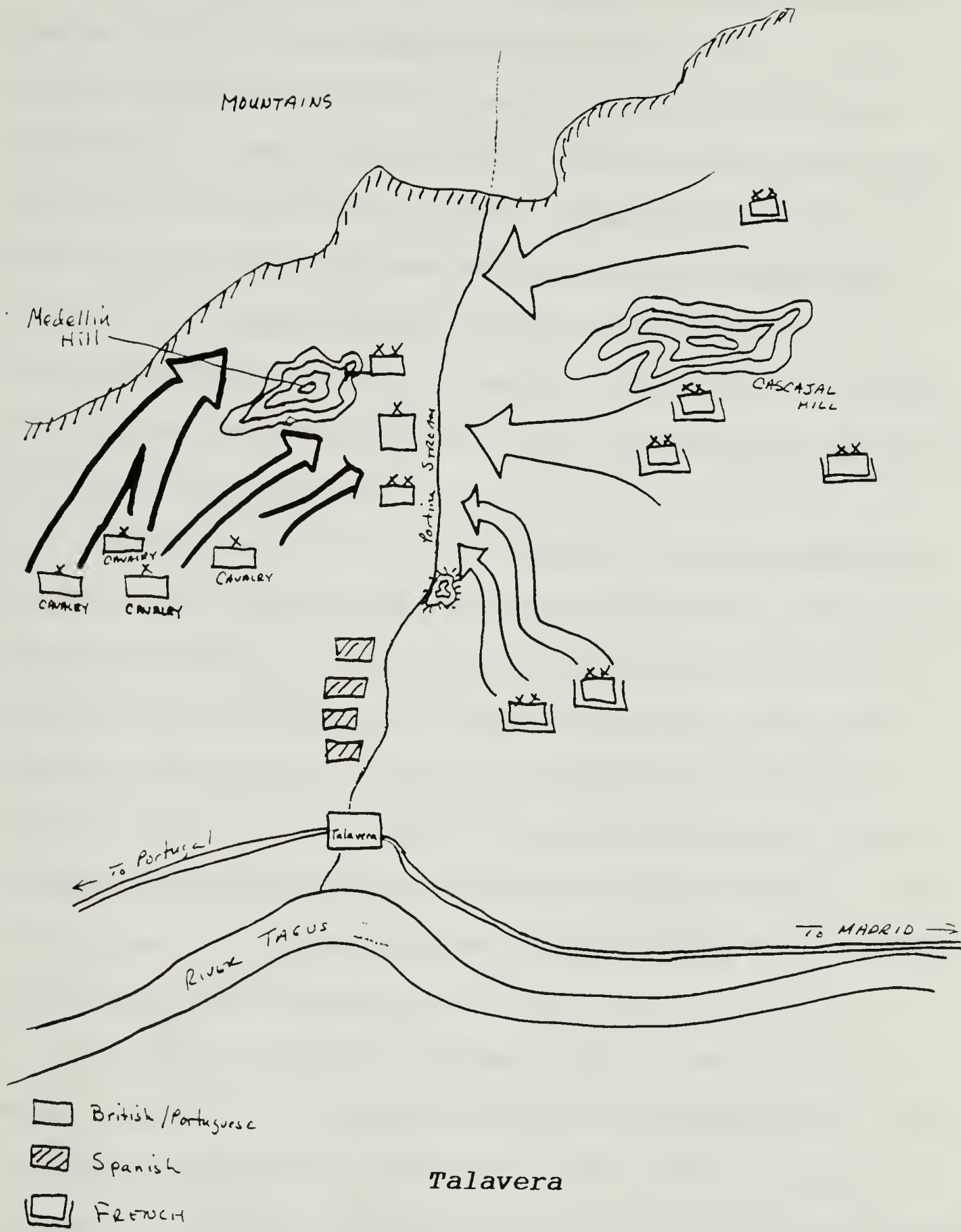
Finally, he intended always to protect his flanks. If he could find natural geographical features to do so, fine. If not, he would detail enough troops (usually cavalry) to carry out the job. Wellesley hoped to prevent enfilade fire and flanking attacks by anchoring his wings in villages, or on river banks, or on ground presenting other topographical obstacles to the enemy. This practice he hoped would reduce or even negate the advantages of superior numbers, which the French usually possessed. An enemy commander would lose the option of simultaneous attacks at multiple points. Patient and careful selection of the place of encounter by a commander can certainly work to overcome his numerical inferiority, as Sir Arthur hoped to show. He would now test his theories in the field and find them fully justified. His defensive brilliance bested the more numerous French at Talavera, Bussaco and at the Lines of Torres Vedras.

Talavera

The British field force ventured into Spain in the spring of 1809, soon after Wellesley's return from the

Cintra inquiries. Early July found Sir Arthur still trying to operate in conjunction with the Spanish, making this sortie an effort at combined operation. The British commander in chief marched the Anglo-Portuguese force of 20,000 along the Tagus River valley to join the 27,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry of General Gregorio Garcia de la Cuesta near Talavera.²² The lieutenant general believed that the combined allied army of 56,000 could easily hold or even defeat the assembled 34,000 troops of French Marshal Claude Victor. The success of the operation depended on keeping a second French force, that of General François Sebastiani, from uniting with Victor. Wellesley and Cuesta agreed to dispatch General Francisco Venegas' Army of La Mancha to keep Sebastiani occupied.²³

Venegas failed to contain Sebastiani's force. It joined Victor's on 26 July bringing the French strength to around 50,000, roughly equal that of the allies.²⁴ The allied force was, however, markedly weaker than the French because of the untested Portuguese and the proven unreliability of the 34,000 Spanish. Wellesley, by winning a battle of wills against Cuesta, selected the site of the battle; Talavera.²⁵ Anchoring his right flank on the Tagus, in the village proper, the lieutenant general arrayed his lines northward along a rise just west of a brook, the Portina Stream. Sir Arthur secured his left on the high ground of the Cerro de Medellin. This position shows superbly



Wellesley's cogent terrain analysis. The Tagus prevented an enemy flanking attack from the south, thus making the right secure. The stream, combined with the upslope, provided a double obstacle to attackers against the lines arrayed between the village and the cerro. Finally, Wellesley entrusted his left flank, on the high ground of the cerro, to one of his most able division commanders, General Sir Rowland Hill. The left was additionally buttressed by cavalry. By common consent, Cuesta placed his Spanish divisions along the brook, closest to the town, where the terrain was steepest and most easily defensible, masked as it was by olive groves.²⁶

The two opposing forces engaged in minor combats at Alcabon and Salinas prior to the battle proper. During the action at Salinas, 10,000 Spanish fled the field at the first sound of musket fire, some of it their own. Even though Cuesta was able to recover some of the fleeing soldiers the net loss came to over 6,000 troops.²⁷ This episode, indicative of the unreliability of Spanish troops in combined operations, served irretrievably to undermine Wellesley's confidence in his ally.

The actual fighting in the prepared positions at Talavera began on 27 July, continued throughout that night, and ended in the late afternoon of the 28th. For practical purposes the battle of Talavera pitted 40,000 French against 20,000 British. After one probing attack early in the

afternoon of the 27th, the French largely ignored the geographically-unassailable position occupied by the Spanish. All the French effort, thereafter, focused on the British lines. They first attacked Hill's division on the cerro. His veterans of Vimiero from the protection of their position repulsed Victor's assault with deadly volley fire. Victor launched a second attack at the cerro, this time under cover of darkness, augmenting it with a flanking attack from the north. Confident there would be no night action, the Anglo-Portuguese forces were literally caught napping. But Hill's division repulsed the French yet again using disciplined volley fire while Wellesley's well-placed cavalry interdicted the French flanking attack. Victor now attempted a massive frontal assault on the morning of the 28th. Attacking into the teeth of the redcoat defense on the cerro, the French columns again faced withering, disciplined volley fire. Until now General John Sherbrooke's brigade, deployed immediately south of the cerro, had remained virtually untouched. Sherbrooke pivoted his force to the left and raked the French columns with a terrible flanking fire. That broke the French attack, and they fled the battlefield. Outnumbered two to one, Wellesley's superior position and disciplined troops had suffered 5,000 casualties to the 7,000 of the French. "The battle of Talavera was the hardest fought of modern times," wrote the British commander. "The fire at Assaye was heavier while it

lasted; but the battle of Talavera lasted for two days and a night."²⁸

Wellesley became Viscount Wellington on 4 September 1809, in recognition of the victory at Talavera. He could not long savor that honor, however. He had to retreat into Portugal because Marshal Soult's 50,000-man force approached rapidly from the northwest in an attempt to cut off Wellington's escape route. During this retreat the British general secretly ordered the construction of a series of defensive belts in Portugal near Lisbon.²⁹ These defenses, which would become known as the Lines of Torres Vedras, would prove the salvation of the British effort in Iberia one year later. As the Anglo-Portuguese force, forever separated from the Spanish army, retreated into the relative safety of Portugal, the French set about the detailed destruction of the Spanish. They completed the task by 1810.

Bussaco and Torres Vedras

Wellesley kept his force in Portugal for over a year, husbanding assets and supplies. Although logistics improved and reinforcements trickled in, neither came in sufficient quantity to convince the lieutenant general to venture across the frontier during that year. Napoleon, meanwhile, had determined to drive out all British forces, the 'hideous

leopard' as he called them, from Iberia. The emperor created the Army of Portugal, numbering 138,000 men, and installed Marshal André Massena as commander.³⁰ Napoleon ordered his marshal to " . . . put himself in a position to hold in check 25,000 English commanded by General Wellington, and to follow the army to attack and destroy it."³¹ Massena began his preparations to achieve that goal in April, 1810.

Wellington, meanwhile, continued to strengthen his defenses at Torres Vedras, named for the eponymous town that served as its all-important central foundation. Planning had begun after a Portuguese officer, Major Jose Maria das Neves Costa, conducted a reconnaissance of the area north of Lisbon in late 1808 and forwarded his annotated maps and recommendations to the British commander in chief.³² Sir Arthur then, together with Lieutenant Colonel Richard Fletcher, the chief British engineer in the peninsula, conducted his own reconnaissance in September of 1809.³³ They determined the best locations for a myriad of defensive installations they believed necessary to stop the French before they could reach Lisbon. The rough, unforgiving mountains and the few roads virtually guaranteed the specific avenues of approach any attacker would have to use. Wellington dispatched a memorandum to Colonel Fletcher on 20 October 1809. In it he detailed how the engineer should establish two or three belts of works that would render the Anglo-Portuguese position impregnable to French assault. He

directed Fletcher to construct dams, redoubts, signal posts, barriers, entrenchments and other defensive works.³⁴.

Why did Wellington undertake such a massive project? He outlined his reasons in a *Memorandum on the Defence of Portugal*, solicited from him by the British Secretary of State, Lord Castlereagh. The *Memorandum* shows Wellington's clear understanding of the situation he presently faced and his almost clairvoyant view of the future war in the peninsula.³⁵

I have always been of the opinion that Portugal might be defended, whatever might be the result of the contest in Spain, and that in the meantime measures adopted for the defence of Portugal would be highly useful to the Spaniards in their contest with the French. My notion was that the Portuguese military establishment ought to be revived, and that in addition to those troops His Majesty ought to employ about 20,000 British troops, including about 4,000 cavalry. My opinion was that, even if Spain should have been conquered, the French would not be able to overrun Portugal with a smaller force than 100,000 men. As long as the contest may continue in Spain, this force [the 20,000 British troops], if it could be placed in a state of activity, would be highly useful to the Spaniards, and might eventually decide the contest.

Other portions of the *Memorandum* argued that the French might even need more than 100,000 troops to dislodge the defenders, but that the probability of their being able to march a force of that size through the harsh, barren Portuguese interior was very unlikely. The *Memorandum* also predicted the campaign in Iberia would drag on for quite a while. Given that probability, defending the Lisbon peninsula would bring the French up short, a legitimate

tactic in a protracted campaign. Wellington's views ran contrary to the conventional military wisdom of the day. For instance, six months before Sir Arthur's communication to Castlereagh, the late Sir John Moore, the much-respected defender of Corunna, had argued, "generally that the frontier of Portugal is not defensible against a superior force." Sir John said: "It is an open frontier, all equally rugged, but all equally to be penetrated. If the French succeed in Spain it will be vain to attempt to resist them in Portugal."³⁶ Wellington did not dismiss Moore's judgment lightly. "The greatest disadvantage under which I labour [preparing the Lines]," Sir Arthur observed, "is that Sir John Moore gave an opinion that the country could not be defended by an army under his command."³⁷ But Wellington stuck to his own views because Moore had never been to Portugal to assess the situation with his own eyes. In the final analysis, Lord Castlereagh accepted Sir Arthur's opinions. Massena's Army of Portugal would, to its misfortune, test the results a year later.

The fixed fortifications of the Lines, manned by regulars, comprised only half of the defensive scheme. In addition, Wellington enlisted the aid of a huge force of irregulars to harass and molest the French in any efforts they made to advance and live off the land. He found this relatively easy to accomplish because he had continued his policies, first begun in India, of remunerating civilians

for goods and services provided to his soldiers. Lord Wellington, furthermore, punished pillagers ruthlessly, further endearing the British commander to the Portuguese. They especially appreciated Wellington's methods since they had experienced the French withdrawals of 1808 and 1809, marked by cruelty, pillage and rape. Thus, when the British commander in chief called for irregulars and special sacrifices by all of the people, he met almost universal cooperation, even when he told the Portuguese to remove all foodstuffs and materiel behind the Lines or, if not able to do so, destroy them. The Portuguese would thus deny the French invaders the means to subsist, while harassing them constantly by guerilla operations.

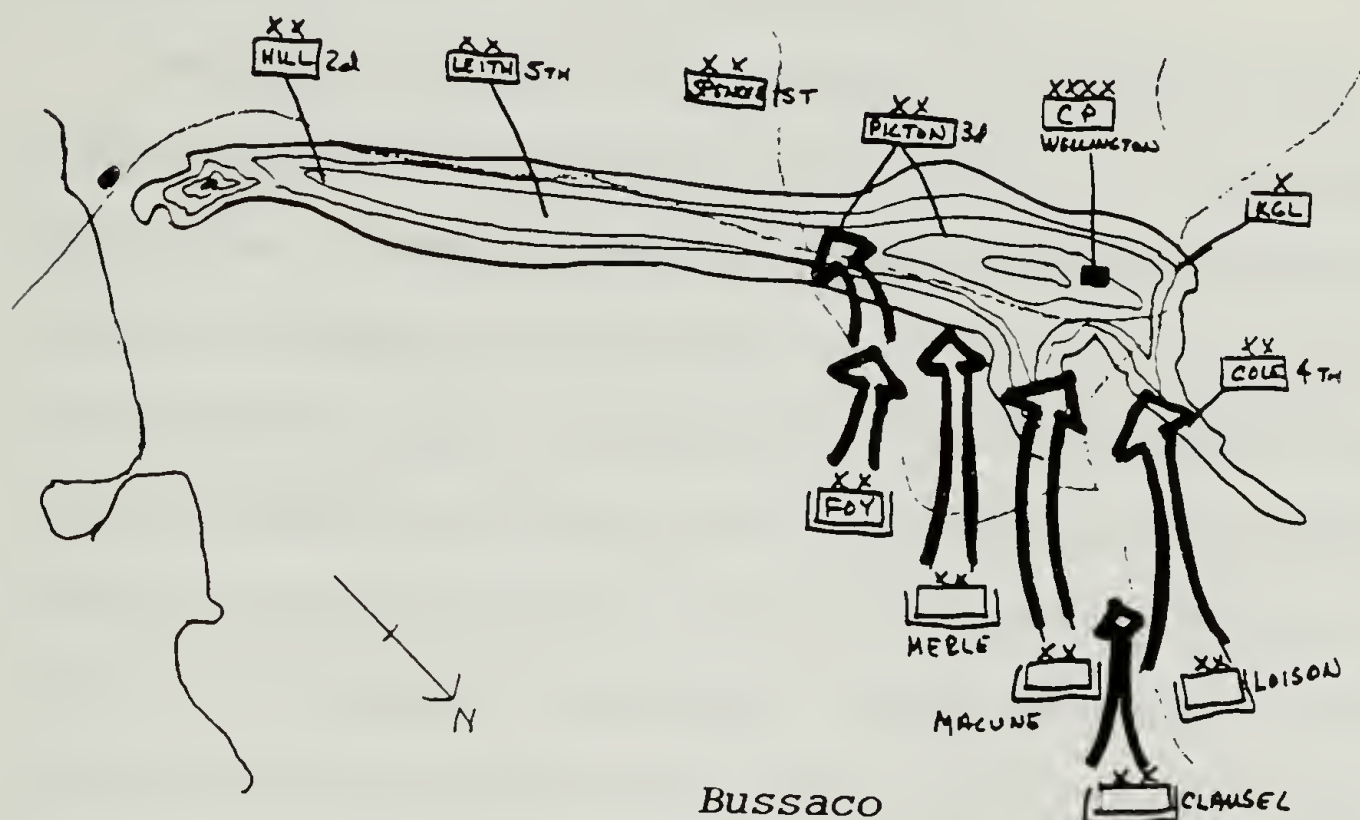
Massena, with 138,000 men, began his invasion of Portugal in 1810, unaware of the obstacles Wellington had put in his way. First he besieged and captured the fortresses guarding the northeastern approach into the country, Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida.³⁸ As the French marshal moved into the interior, Wellington kept his own Anglo-Portuguese army of 52,000 just out of reach, never allowing his force to become decisively engaged with the vastly greater numbers of French. Massena, for his part, soon experienced the results of Wellington's work with his Portuguese friends. "It is impossible to find worse roads than these," wrote Massena. "All our marches are across a desert; not a soul to be seen anywhere; everything is

abandoned."³⁹ The French marshal finally, however, 'found' Wellington near Bussaco on 25 April 1810.

Wellington had intended he do so. The British general had discovered a defensive position to his liking. He had deployed his 52,000 men and their 60 guns on a ridge, nine miles long. From atop it they had an excellent view of the battlefield into which geography would funnel the French. The steep slope of the ridge protected the allied front and flanks. The Mondego River further guarded the allied right. The height of the ridge essentially neutralized Massena's artillery, which he had struggled to drag through the narrow passes of the precipitous mountains of northern Portugal. Early nineteenth-century cannon could hurl their balls only at low velocity with a resulting arcing trajectory. As a result they could not fire upward very effectively against troops deployed as were the allies. Wellington's guns, by contrast, could work with deadly effect on an enemy climbing up the steep sides of the ridge. Massena, furthermore, had managed to assemble only 65,000 of his army for battle. These troops, to reach their enemies, would have to attack up the steep defile without the benefit of artillery support.

The battle of Bussaco followed. The Napoleonic armies had hitherto enjoyed success throughout Europe by utilizing column formations in the attack. They did so at Bussaco, attacking uphill in dense, compact columns. Disciplined

British infantry volley fire joined British artillery - hurling canister and grape shot - in tearing to shreds the thick formations crawling up the incline of the ridge.



The French charged repeatedly in their columns, but could never break the British, who inflicted terrible damage. General Maximilien Foy, who led a column in that assault, vividly described the carnage:

My heroic column, much diminished during the ascent, reached the summit of the plateau, which was covered with hostile troops. Those on our left made a flank movement and smashed us up by their battalion volleys; meanwhile, those on our front, covered by some rocks, were murdering us with impunity. The head of my column fell back to its right, despite my efforts; I could not get them to deploy, disorder set in, and the 17th and 70th raced downhill in headlong flight.⁴⁰

Finally, beaten badly, all the French had to give up the assault. They had lost 5,000 men to the allies' 1,250. Wellington had broken the code. Napoleonic armies, blindly adhering to their mentor's tactics, had fallen victim to commanding position and volley fire.⁴¹

Rebuffed, Massena still vastly outnumbered his adversaries. He now redoubled his efforts to catch them. Wellington retired to Torres Vedras and awaited the French marshal. Massena finally reached the Lines in October. What he saw shocked him. He had dismissed as ludicrous the initial reports of his scouts.⁴² He should have paid closer attention. For he now found, arrayed before him, 165 fortified sections - redoubts - equipped with 628 guns and manned by 45,000 Anglo-Portuguese regulars. The redoubts varied in size and strength with garrisons ranging from 50 to 2,000 soldiers. The defenses were integrated into the adjoining terrain to form three belts arranged concentrically on the peninsula. They communicated by signal telegraph, installed by the Royal Navy. The navy had also positioned gunboats in the Tagus.⁴³ Massena could find no way through or around the Lines. His invading Army of Portugal was impotent, now caught between the Lines to his front and a very inhospitable group of irregulars to his rear. With insignificant exceptions, the irregulars had swept the land of all usable food and forage and had severed the French lines of communication between Spain and

Portugal. Massena had no choice but to quit Portugal, unable to drive the 'hideous leopard' into the sea. By this time Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese force had bled Massena's army of 73,000 men.⁴⁴

Artillery

Wellington's artillery contributed increasingly to this bleeding. He used it ever more frequently to ever better purpose between 1808 and 1811. In part he did so because he acquired more and more guns and ammunition as the campaign progressed, and because he had increased and improved overland transport. In addition, the lieutenant general grew increasingly more familiar with artillery employment and capabilities.

He hid his infantry from the French cannoneers, knowing full well the destructive capability of French artillery. By contrast his guns, ever growing in numbers, did more and more damage to the French infantry. At Talavera the British employed 30 guns; at Bussaco, 60; and in the defense of the lines of Torres Vedras, almost 700.⁴⁵ The future field-marshal obviously came to recognize that artillery could increase significantly the killing power of his army, an especially valuable asset in the face of the vastly larger

French forces. The French lost 5,000 dead at the battle of Bussaco, the majority victims of British artillery.⁴⁶

Master of the Defense

Wellington conducted a handful of major defensive actions and a host of minor engagements in the Peninsula. At each of these engagements the French had initiated the attack, obviously in the belief that they would win. That faith cost them heavily. They lost the battles and large numbers of men as well. After the relatively high ten percent casualties at Talavera, Wellington's men, when fighting defensively, generally experienced a casualty rate of under four percent as compared to the eight percent and higher the French suffered during the same period.⁴⁷ The future duke's method of fighting the Napoleonic armies in Iberia would become so effective that the French generals would grow genuinely afraid to engage him.⁴⁸ Somehow, he did not seem to fight fairly. How else explain his success against France's best? Lieutenant Colonel Jean Jacques Pelet, aide-de-camp to Marshal Massena during the operations in Portugal, penned a seven-point condemnation of Wellington's tactical deployments at Bussaco.⁴⁹ Pelet failed to mention, however, the overwhelming victory this British general won with his faulty tactics. General Foy

went even further. He condemned Wellington's perceived preference for the defense as a dishonorable means of conducting war.⁵⁰

CHAPTER 4

SIEGECRAFT IN THE PENINSULA

Siegecraft: Wellington's Achilles

"Everyone knows that the record of the Peninsular army in the matter of sieges, is not the most brilliant page in its annals."

Sir Charles Oman¹

The conduct of sieges is as old as combat itself. With the advent of effective artillery, sieges usually progressed in a standard fashion. The besiegers first surrounded the fort, fortress or city, cutting it off from outside help. Next they bombarded the curtain walls until the artillery had breached them. Finally, the besiegers assaulted their enemy through the breaches. The conduct of the siege campaign in nineteenth-century Iberia was very rudimentary, however, even by contemporary standards. Part of the reason for this primitiveness owed to the extreme difficulties both sides encountered attempting to transport the artillery necessary to breach the walls of the fortresses. Siege artillery, conventionally referred to as the siege train, weighed much more than field artillery because the guns were much larger in caliber and of more rugged construction,

hence heavier than the field pieces. Only these behemoths could fire the large shot fired at the high velocity necessary to batter the walls of the fortresses. The smallest practical component of a siege train was the eighteen-pounder (18-pdr).² Twenty-four pounders (24-pdrs) were probably the best combination of power to weight. Thirty-two pounders (32-pdrs) were the most powerful but, of course, much heavier than those of smaller caliber. Moreover, the ox-cart ruts that passed for roads in Spain, usually in deplorable condition, often made overland transport, when possible, a nightmare. Under those circumstances, the greater portability of the 18- and 24-pdrs far overshadowed their relatively lower firepower. Ammunition, of course was also very heavy and in chronically short supply. Finally, the British artillery corps often lacked sufficient numbers of trained artillerists.

The successful conduct of a siege required not only heavy guns with trained artillerymen but also, and indispensably, a body of trained engineers. The engineer corps existed in little more than name in the British army. Its officers, good, bad and indifferent, gained promotion only by seniority. Wellington's chief engineer in the peninsula, forty-one year old Lieutenant Colonel Richard Fletcher, possessed experience and military sagacity far beyond his rank.³ At the least he should probably have been a brigadier. The rank and file of the engineer corps,

the sappers and miners, formed only a small cadre of the Royal Military Artificers. Unfortunately for Wellington, not until 1812 did the first of these "trained" sappers and miners arrive in the peninsular theater. Upon observing them there, the British commander averred that they "had never seen a sap, battery, or trench constructed."⁴ The poor state of the engineer corps and the siege artillery owed mainly to the miserliness of the British government, which had attempted to economize. Britain was an island nation rich in naval tradition and accustomed to glorious victories at sea. Sailors such as Drake and Nelson were her heroes. Land warfare and siegecraft played no part in the great traditions. Most Englishmen in 1812 probably could name only one outstanding general from their history; the Duke of Marlborough. The famed exploits of that revered peer had taken place 100 years ago, well beyond the memory of people living in the 1800's. Moreover, Britain had been at war with France almost continuously since the French Revolution. During that 20 years, not once had a British force faced the prospect of a siege against a properly constructed and prepared fortress.⁵ It is, therefore, not surprising that siegecraft was foreign to the British army in the peninsula.

General Wellington's experiences in the art were, at best, superficial. The native forts of India were old in design and poor in construction. The flimsy walls of the fort at Assaye could not even support the weight of

Scindia's guns. Often the mere presence of the redcoats catapulted the Indians into flight, obviating the necessity for any sort of siege. India had provided Wellington with little preparation for the scientifically-designed citadels of Iberia.

"The truth is," complained the British commander in chief, "that, equipped as we are, the British army are not capable of carrying on a regular siege."⁶ Equipped or not, the British would find their activities in the Peninsular War confined to the successful defense of Portugal unless they could control the fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. Those two citadels, held by French regulars, guarded the best routes between Spain and Portugal. He knew he had to take those roads to supply and move his army. In the interior of Spain, Wellington would also find himself involved in the siege of another citadel, Burgos, as part of a larger offensive campaign against the French. Wellington took two out of the three in 1812, but at heavy cost. He felt deeply the human consequences, measured in high casualty rates, of his mistakes and, therefore, rarely committed the same error twice. His steadily-decreasing casualties during the defense of Portugal attest to that feature of his generalship. Yet the future field marshal's record in siege operations does not match his record in open battle, just the reverse. He took higher casualties at Badajoz than in the earlier effort at Ciudad Rodrigo. The

last, Burgos, turned into an unqualified failure. He did not capture the fortress and lost more than 2,000 allied soldiers dead in the failed effort.⁷

Ciudad Rodrigo

The French believed that the British had gone into winter quarters in December, 1811, to regroup from the efforts of that year's campaigns, which had included the failed first and second sieges of Badajoz.⁸ In the autumn of 1811 Wellington enlisted Major Alexander Dickson, his most able artillery advisor, and entrusted him to assemble and transport a massive siege train from the Atlantic coast of Portugal to Ciudad Rodrigo. The new siege train consisted mainly of new iron guns and howitzers of English cast.⁹ The determined and innovative Dickson used barges to bring the guns up the Duoro, as far as Lamego. From there, hundreds of mule, bullock and oxen teams, with wagoners, took the artillery overland to Almeida. Near there the British assembled the siege train, with ammunition, a task they had completed by December, 1811. The entire project took longer than three months. "The bringing of sixty-eight huge guns, with proportionate stores, across fifty miles of mountain was an operation of magnitude;" wrote Sir William Napier, "five thousand draft bullocks were required for the

train alone, and above a thousand militia were for several weeks employed merely to repair the road."¹⁰ The British were able to keep all of their considerable efforts to assemble this formidable siege train a secret from the French. Wellington's officers knew that surprise was the key to the operation. Major Edward C. Cocks, an intelligence officer, wrote to his father:

We are all now occupied in preparation for the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo. Marmont has gone to Valencia to assist Suchet against Blake and if what I hear be true, is too far off to interrupt us. He probably presumed that we should not attempt a siege at this season of the year.¹¹

The British commander in chief invested Ciudad Rodrigo between 7 and 10 January 1812. The fortress, of modern design, had been much battered during the course of the war.¹² It was also weakly garrisoned. The new siege train quickly reduced two sections of the curtain wall to rubble. During this same period, British infantry dug a series of trenches and saps that allowed the allies to approach the citadel under cover. The engineers declared the two breaches, a main one to the right and a smaller one to the left, sufficiently wide to favor an assault on the 19th, less than two weeks after the arrival of the besiegers.¹³ Nevertheless, a French force under the command of Marmont had learned of the siege and had already reached Salamanca. The allies had to take Ciudad Rodrigo before he arrived to overwhelm them and lift the siege. Wellington ordered the

assault for the evening of the 19th, as soon as there was enough darkness to cover the attack.¹⁴ The soldiers greeted the news with relief, glad they could leave the trenches they had recently carved out of the frozen soil, and anxious to be done with living like frozen moles.

Private William Wheeler revealed the troopers' sentiments:

The men on sentry duty were not only exposed to the cold winds but were much annoyed by the frequent visits of the wolves. We could hear the roaring of the guns at Rodrigo, and we heartily wished the place reduced.¹⁵

That evening the forlorn hope, the small vanguard who first approached the smaller breach, was led by Lieutenant John Gurwood. Despite a wound to the head, Gurwood advanced steadily amidst a terrible fire. He managed to reach the fortress's governor and accept his sword in surrender. General Thomas Picton's 3rd Division poured through the larger breach on the right and the British swiftly occupied the town. From beginning to end Wellington's siege had required twelve days. Two years earlier, in 1810, Marshal Michel Ney had used a full month to do the same thing. The allied victory came at a price of heavy casualties, as did most sieges. Wellington lost 1,000 men to the French 500. He took 2,000 enemy prisoners.¹⁶

Wellington's swift work thwarted French attempts to relieve their besieged comrades. He took Ciudad Rodrigo before the French armies, barely assembled at Salamanca from their scattered winter quarters throughout Castile, could

move to save it. The Anglo-Portuguese army now possessed the northern gateway of Spain. Wellington had behaved patiently, waiting for the siege train so ably managed by Dickson. But the lieutenant general had acted decisively too, seizing the opportunity to attack in the middle of the cold, mountain winter.

The Third Siege of Badajoz

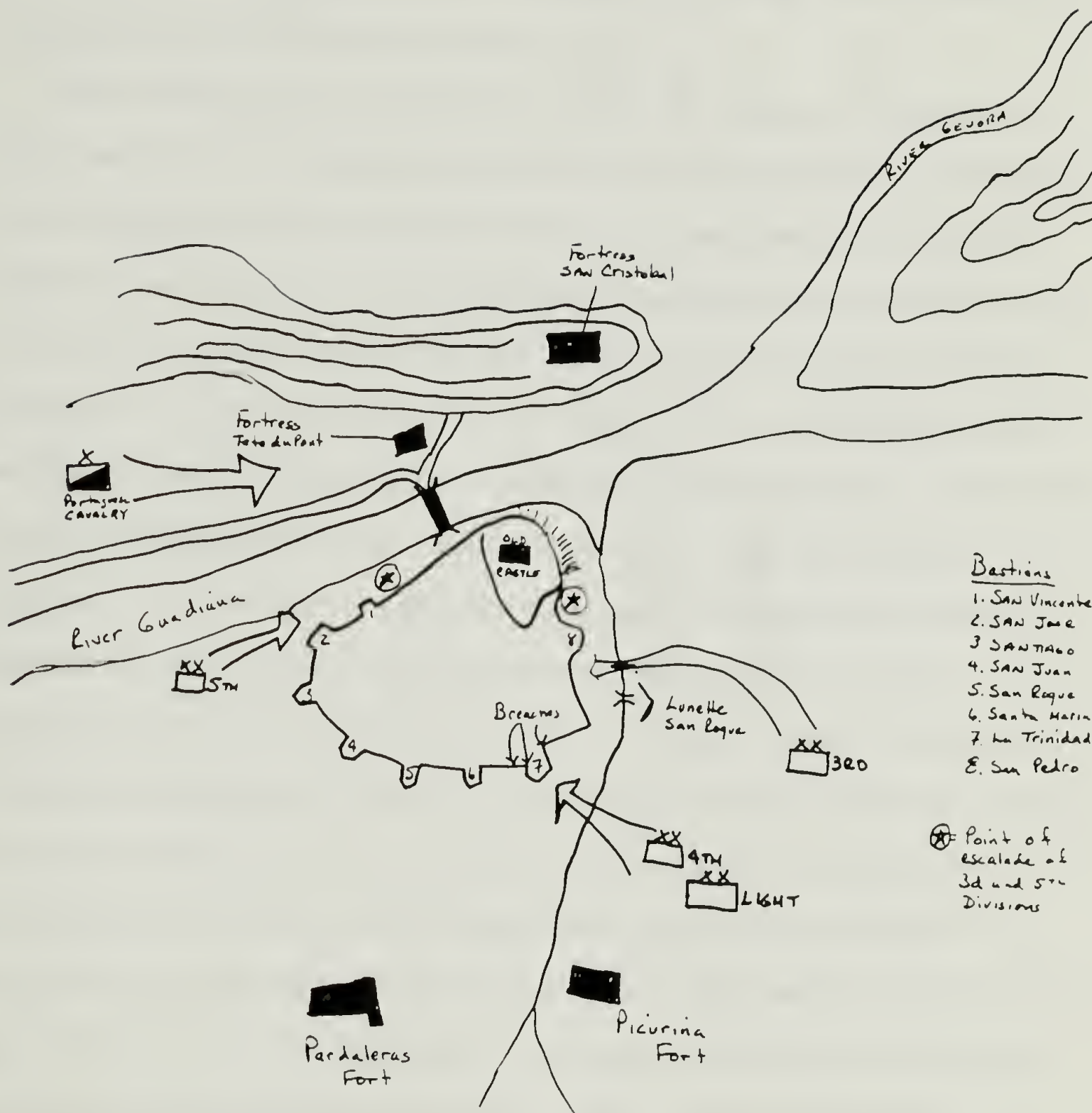
Following the capture of Ciudad Rodrigo, Wellington set off, with only a small part of his staff, for Badajoz in the south.¹⁷ He intended to besiege Badajoz for the third time. This time he hoped to achieve it with the army of General Sir Rowland Hill, encamped in the vicinity of Elvas.¹⁸ Twice before, but only once under Wellington's direct supervision, the allies had besieged the city in 1811. At the time they lacked any decent siege guns and the approach of relieving French armies had forced them to withdraw before they could finish the job. "Since our return to Penamacor," Private Wheeler wrote, "we have been employed in assisting the battering train from Saba Gal to Castala Branco. I understand the train is on the road to Elvas. If so, Baddajos is the next place to be reduced."¹⁹

General Wellington, lacking adequate transport, could only send a small portion of the siege train from Ciudad

Rodrigo: sixteen 24-pdrs and the same number of 24-pdr howitzers.²⁰ While the besiegers had fewer guns available at Badajoz than at Ciudad Rodrigo, they still had better artillery than at the two previous failed efforts. The Royal Navy, furthermore, reluctantly agreed to send some additional large-bore guns along the less demanding route from Lisbon.²¹

The third siege of Badajoz had to succeed quickly. If it did not, relieving French armies could assault the besiegers. The allies had to work against the fortress and against time. But tight schedules do not make for efficient sieges. The fortress at Badajoz, furthermore, was larger, stronger and more heavily garrisoned than that at Ciudad Rodrigo, making it a tougher place to take.²²

Badajoz was well-suited to repel attack from the north, protected, as it was, by the River Guadiana, a waterway that ran 300-500 yards wide. The nearest usable bridge, at Merida, lay 30 miles to the east of Badajoz.²³ The original fortress, an old Moorish castle, overlooked the river from the high ground in the northeast corner, where steep cliffs ran down to the waterside. A wall, built in 1757, enlarged the fortified area by several times. A curtain wall and eight bastions guarded the main fortress. The bastions reached up to 30 feet, the curtain five to eight feet lower. Outer works consisted of the Picurina Fort to the southeast, the Pardaleras fort to the southwest



Badajoz

and the San Roque Lunette, which guarded the bridge across the Rivallas Brook to the east. A significant hill mass, San Cristobal, to the north-northwest of the town, rose more than one hundred feet above the river. Another fortress, built upon that promontory, intended to deny the commanding heights to an attacking enemy.²⁴

Wellington had studied the French siege of Badajoz of 1811, which had succeeded. The Gallic attack had focused on the Pardaleras fort but the British commander refused to repeat that tactic. His engineers recommended assaulting the old castle, their plan little changed from the two failed attempts of the year before.²⁵ That idea, too, the general rejected. Wellington opted instead for an assault across the marshy lowground to the southeast, near the Trinidad bastion, one of the eight at Badajoz. The British general preferred that site, according to the premier siege historian of the Peninsular War, Sir John Jones, because "the counterguard in front of the right angle of the bastion of La Trinidad had been left in an unfinished state."²⁶ Wellington may also have chosen La Trinidad in order to surprise the French, hoping they had left only a small force to defend it. The commander in chief could ill afford to remain outside Badajoz for too long, lest the French coalesce and with their vastly superior numbers converge on his sieging force. The French garrison knew that a powerful siege executed via the Pardaleras fort could succeed, since

they had done it in 1811. The two earlier British efforts had both focused on the old castle, by way of San Cristobal. It is reasonable to assume that the French would not expect an attack from across the marshes to their south. If they did, surely they would have either completed the construction of the wall in that area or at least buttressed it. But they had done neither.

The allied siege train arrived from Ciudad Rodrigo in late March of 1812. The assistance provided by the Royal Navy, less than promised, had forced Major Dickson to augment his cannon force with whatever he could scrounge at Elvas. The artilleryman was able to bring 20 guns of variable caliber and manufacture to Badajoz. This mongrel collection included bronze Russian 18-pdrs and an assortment of seventeenth-century pieces of questionable value: "In general there was room between the shot and the bore to put a man's finger in," the historian Jones observed.²⁷ That many of the bores of these guns were of non-standard diameter made the already difficult task of resupplying ammunition even more challenging. Clearly, one would not expect much accuracy from these batteries. With the artillery, such as it was, at last present, the engineers could finally begin their work against La Trinidad.

They began construction of their trenches and batteries under cannon fire from the Picurina fort, a mere 400 yards from the Trinidad bastion. To stop this harassment and

operate their guns safely, once emplaced, the British had to take Picurina. They carried it on 25 March at a cost of sixty percent casualties out of a storming party of 250.²⁸

The guns then found their way into the batteries and began pummeling the curtain and the bastion, while the howitzers lobbed explosive shells over the walls. By 5 April the firing had created two breaches, one in the bastion and the other in the curtain wall to its southwest. The engineers deemed them practicable on the 5th, but Wellington ordered a third breach. The artillery achieved it as well, at the juncture of the right side of the Trinidad bastion where it met the curtain wall. On 6 April the commander in chief ordered an assault at 7 p.m. Delays caused the schedule to be pushed back three hours until ten p.m. During those three hours the artillery eased their fire, believing the assault already to have begun earlier. The French used the reprieve to shore up the gaps in the walls and load them with deadly obstacles.

The plan of the assault called for the Light Division and the 4th Division to storm the three breaches between them, with the Light Division on the left. The 3rd Division should sneak north around the San Roque Lunette, traverse the Rivalles Brook at the Mill Dam and go over the curtain wall, near the castle, by escalade. Meanwhile, to the north, the 5th Division should attempt to climb the walls east of the San Vicente bastion. To facilitate the operations of the

3rd and 5th divisions (escalades could be very bloody), Wellington ordered a diversionary attack on the Tete du Pont fortress, on the north bank of the Guadiana.

At 10 pm. the attack began. The 3rd, 4th and Light divisions charged into a maelstrom of fire. A survivor of that terrible night, Major George Simmons of the 95th Rifles, described his attack into hell:

Our columns moved on under a most dreadful fire of grape that mowed down our men like grass. We tore down the pallisading and got upon the glacis. My captain was shot in the mouth. Eight or ten officers, and men innumerable, fell to rise no more. Ladders were rested upon the counterscarp from within the ditch. Down these we hurried, and as fast as we got down rushed forward to the breaches, where a most frightful scene of carnage was going on. Fifty times they [the French] were stormed, and as often without effect, the French cannon sweeping the ditches with a most destructive fire. The ditch, from the place where we entered near the top of the breaches, was covered with dead and dying soldiers. If a man fell wounded, ten to one that he ever rose again, for the volleys of musketry and grapeshot that were incessantly poured amongst us made our situation too horrid for description. I had seen some fighting, but nothing like this. We remained passively here to be slaughtered, as we could do the besieged little injury from the ditch.²⁹

The thundering fire of the French defenders stopped the 4th and Light divisions cold, inflicting them with staggering casualties. The 3rd Division under the crusty Picton, however, managed to carry the castle. General Sir James Leith's 5th Division saved the night. Attacking the San Vincente bastion under fierce fire from above, the redcoats pressed their way forward relentlessly. They brought up their ladders, scaled them and hurtled over the

walls. A junior officer in Leith's division described how they managed the seemingly impossible:

The rampart at this point was surrounded by a regular ditch into which there was no descent but with the assistance of the ladders which we carried, and the rampart itself, nearly 30 ft. high, with revetment. Our 24 ft. ladders, therefore. . . had nearly played us a trick; but the parapet above the cordon was climbable on such an occasion to such as we were not interfered with from above. It was some time before we could establish our footing upon the rampart, but. . . we had thrown, or rather lifted, four regiments into the town before midnight.³⁰

Picton joined Leith and Badajoz belonged to Wellington. After the siege, Wellington viewed the carnage at the breaches. All told, he had suffered almost 5,000 casualties. To the great surprise of his staff, their stoic leader lost his almost mythical self-control and wept. The next day he penned his report to Lord Liverpool, the minister of war: "The capture of Badajoz affords as strong an instance of the gallantry of our troops as has ever been displayed. But I greatly hope that I shall never again be the instrument of putting them to such a test."³¹

He had been the instrument. To him belonged the victory. To him also fell the responsibility for the price of that victory. His plan of attack disregarded the advice of the engineering officers, whom he liked and admired as men, but in whose professional abilities he had little confidence. "Our engineers, though brave and well-educated," he wrote, "have never turned their mind to the

mode of conducting a regular siege."³² That plan included two escalades, in addition to storming the breaches, and the "diversions", not the main assault, succeeded.

He attacked Badajoz, significantly stronger than Ciudad Rodrigo, with less than half of the artillery power he had employed against the northern citadel. Wellington acted as his own chief of staff for engineering matters. He ordered his attack prematurely, before the breaches were truly practicable. In part he felt he had to do so because the French armies rapidly bore down on Badajoz to relieve the beleaguered city. But having made the decision, he should have gotten his men into position on time, especially with time at a premium. Instead, for one reason or another, he delayed moving against the breaches for three hours after the scheduled departure, a delay that allowed the defenders to regroup and prepare to repel the attackers. The siege of Badajoz, ultimately successful, cost him five times the losses he had suffered at Ciudad Rodrigo.

Burgos

On 22 July 1812 Lord Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese army shattered the French Army of Portugal at the battle of Salamanca, arguably the finest offensive operation conducted by the future field marshal.³³ Following that astounding

success, however, came a dilemma. If he pursued the remnants of the Army of Portugal, the other French forces would most certainly unite and, in their lessened but still greater strength, destroy the allies. So, like Napoleon in the days before Waterloo, Wellington tried to catch and engage single enemy armies. For that reason, he marched to Madrid to try to lure Marshal Soult's small Army of the Centre into battle. Soult would have none of it and fled. Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese force, victorious but exhausted after Salamanca, occupied the capital city of Spain, now devoid of enemy soldiers. Meanwhile, the other French armies worked to recover and regroup. The Army of Portugal, somewhat reconstituted after their drubbing at Salamanca, began to demonstrate in the Duoro River valley. The Army of the North, farther to the northeast, moved westward toward the Army of Portugal. In early September Wellington moved out of Madrid toward Burgos hoping to block the union of those two French forces. He now chose to besiege the fortress, and the Anglo-Portuguese army invested Burgos on 19 September 1812.

The siege of Burgos seemed doomed from the beginning. The twin operations of Badajoz and Salamanca had thinned heavily the ranks of the best divisions of Wellington's army: the 3rd, 4th, 5th and Light. The commander in chief had left them in Madrid to rest and had taken with him less experienced units, thinking of Burgos as only a minor operation. The Anglo-Portuguese had only three 18-pdr

battering guns with a paltry 1,306 round shot. The rest had not caught up from the previous campaigns and Wellington did not expect them for several weeks.³⁴ Against those three guns stood a very stout fortress the strength of which the British commander grossly underrated: "It was not unlike a hill fort in India, and I had got into a good many of them."³⁵ He could scarcely have been more wrong. The works at Burgos were awesome. No hill fort, it had a triple layer of defenses and a formidable battery of artillery. The first layer, or wall system, around the old keep, included a casemated battery built at Napoleon's direction. The second and third layers, concentric walls with modern parapets, revetments and ravelins covered every approach. The logistical depot for the Army of the North, it contained more than ample supplies. Wellington soon began to realize that Burgos would be no easy job, contrary to his initial expectations. Between the obviously formidable fort and his own dearth of proper siege equipment he became, in his own words, "A little apprehensive that I have not the means to take this castle."³⁶

Uncharacteristically, he now vacillated. He did not withdraw but neither did he press home a full-scale assault. The general, now an earl, began a series of disjointed and fragmented attacks that signified both a lack of mission and a lack of confidence. As early as 5 October the earl had remarked that, "our final success is. . .doubtful.", but he

nonetheless continued the assaults through 18 October.³⁷

With the Armies of Portugal and the North closing in on him, Wellington abandoned the operation on 21 October. The Anglo-Portuguese army then had to retreat in a headlong rush to Portugal.

Understandably, Wellington's stock dropped with everyone, but especially with his troops. When he had visited some of his soldiers in the hospital after the battle of Albuera which followed the failed first siege of Badajoz, where he had not commanded personally, they had said: "If you had commanded us, my Lord, there wouldn't be so many of us here."³⁸ After Burgos a more common sentiment was: "If ever a man ruined himself, [Wellington] has done it. For the last two months he has acted like a madman."³⁹

The siege failed abjectly. It cost over 2,000 lives for no apparent gain. Why? Lady Longford believes exhaustion brought on by too many years of war caused the earl's unorthodox and uncharacteristic behavior.⁴⁰ Wellington's tendency to do everything for himself certainly lends credence to the Longford thesis. Michael Glover argues that while a tactical failure, the siege at Burgos brought strategic advantages. By forcing the Armies of Portugal and the North to come to the aid of Burgos, the future field marshal allowed the guerrillas of Navarre and the Basque country to wrest control of their provinces away from the

French, thereby enabling the spring offensive of 1813. That conclusion, however, reaches beyond the available facts. Glover's contention that the "fiasco at Burgos led directly to the victory at Vitoria," may be true.⁴¹ But did Wellington so plan it? Did he consciously believe his siege of Burgos would free Navarre and the Basque country? If so, Wellington's official dispatches and personal correspondence do not so demonstrate. Surely he would have tried to mitigate the debacle if he had the means. Instead he said: "It was entirely my own act."⁴² He seemed to have had no master strategic plan in mind when he invested the fortress. Burgos was a tragic defeat born of over-extended lines, poor preparation and, as Lady Longford avers, a general much in need of a rest. Sir John Fortescue, in his History of the British Army wrote: ". . .the abortive siege of Burgos was the most unsatisfactory operation on Wellington's part during the whole of the Peninsular War."⁴³

CHAPTER 5

THE CONSUMMATE FIELD MARSHAL

The Conclusion of the Peninsular War

After the defensive campaign of 1809 through 1811, Sir Arthur's detractors called him cautious and timid. Following the very sanguine sieges of 1812, these same pundits accused him of being rash to a fault.¹ Wellington's army almost disintegrated during the retreat to Portugal following Burgos, a development that the earl found intolerable:

The officers lost all control over their men. Irregularities and outrages of all descriptions were committed with impunity, and losses have been sustained which ought never to have occurred. . . I have no hesitation in attributing these evils to the habitual inattention of the officers of the regiments to their duties.²

A reaffirmation of order and discipline ensued as the peninsular army went into its winter quarters near Ciudad Rodrigo. Signally, Wellington probably committed himself this time to the offense for his next campaign.

In the spring of 1813 the allied army again sallied forth into Spain, but this time under far more favorable circumstances than in the past. First, the British had poured reinforcements into Portugal throughout the winter. The forces now under Wellington's command numbered over

200,000.³ That number included, after 22 September 1812, the armies of Spain after the *Junta* bestowed the title of Generalissimo of the Spanish Armies upon the British general. The French forces, on the other hand, had shrunk to a little over 230,000. For the first time the allies would operate in an environment of virtual parity with the imperial armies.⁴

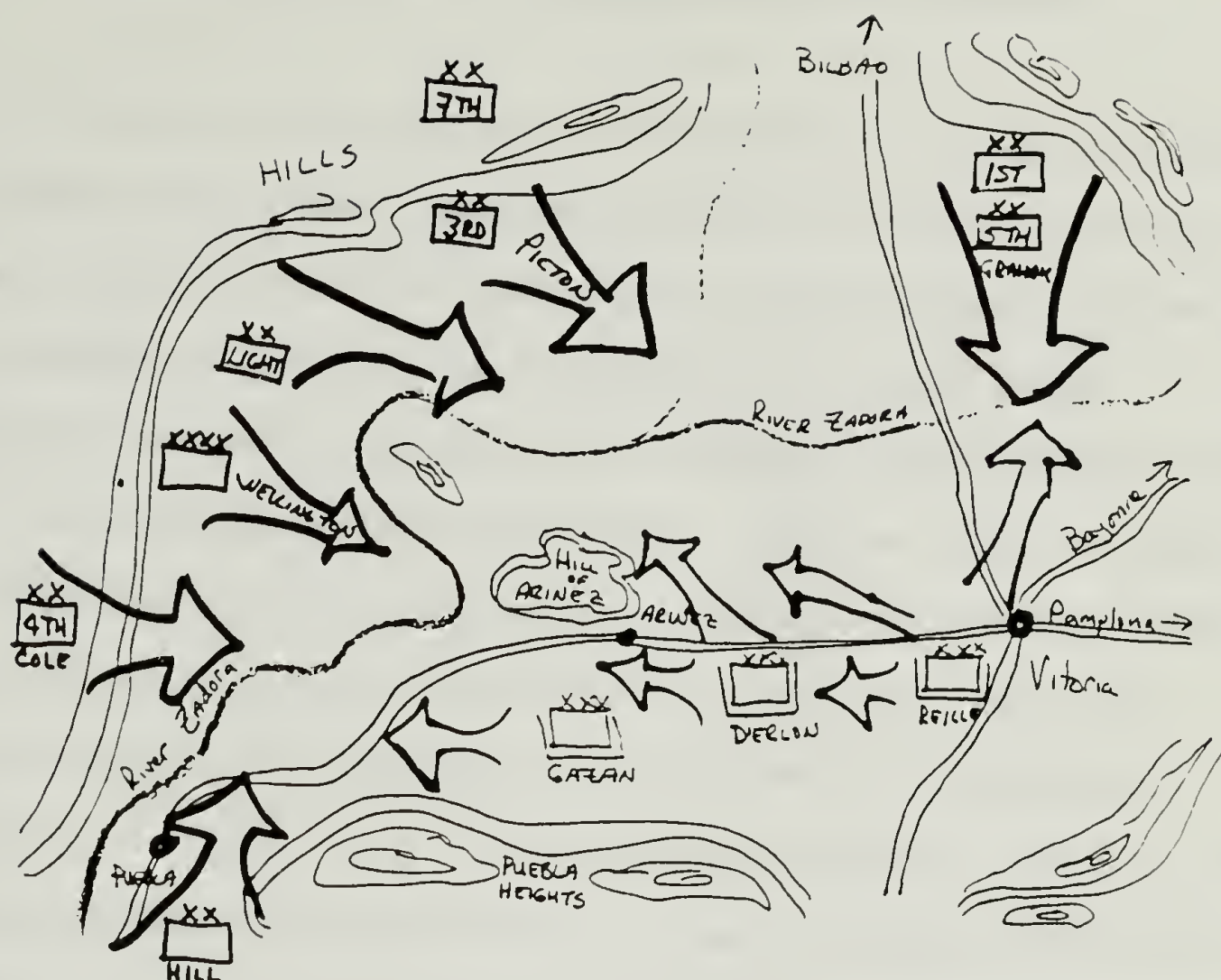
Wellington decided to advance along the Salamanca road from Ciudad Rodrigo and, on 22 May began the march eastward. The French fled before him. The Gallic armies were war-weary and unreinforced because of Napoleon's greater problems in Russia.⁵ The French abandoned Burgos, Wellington's nemesis of 1812, under pressure from the allied juggernaut. Farther and harder the earl pushed his army, across the difficult and unforgiving terrain of northern Spain. In fewer than 30 days the allied force marched almost 300 miles and found itself in position to attack Bilbao, Vitoria or both. King Joseph, Napoleon's brother, chose to offer battle at Vitoria.

The southern portion of the allied field force, that closest to Vitoria, arrived near the city on the evening of 20 June 1813. Almost immediately the British commander-in-chief recognized that King Joseph, who had taken command from his brother's marshals, was over-extended and disorganized. The French mustered some 55,000 men stretched along a twelve mile front, while the king directed his

energies toward dispatching his amassed booty safely over the Pyrenees.⁶ Into this chaos Wellington brought 80,000 footsore and irate troops determined to make the 'Frenchies' pay for the discomfort caused by the lengthy march.⁷

The British Lion who had defeated the Tiger of Mysore could finally attack. He ordered a simultaneous three-pronged assault. First, General Thomas Graham's 20,000 men would hit JOseph from the north. From the southwest, General Hill's 20,000 troops should descend upon the Imperial forces from the Puebla heights. The largest force, 30,000 men grouped into four divisions, would charge from the west: the 3rd and 7th Divisions to the north near Mendoza; the Light Division at Tres Puentes; Cole's 4th near Nanclares; and Wellington's column just to the south of Villodas. The balance of the allied force, some 10,000, would form the reserve.

The operation worked as planned. The simultaneous attacks from the north, west and southwest completely overwhelmed the French. King JOseph had no option but to run, and flee he did. For their part, the allies did not pursue the retreating French army as they should have. Nevertheless, the 'Sepoy General', as Napoleon disparagingly referred to Wellington, was after Vitoria the unquestioned champion of Spain. Following that battle, the government honored Wellington with the highest military rank it could bestow: field marshal.



Vitoria

Throughout the balance of 1813 and the first part of 1814, Sir Arthur pushed the French further and further back over the Pyrenees. The Peninsular War ended on 10 April 1814, after the battle of Toulouse. On 3 May 1814 the British commander attained the highest rank in the peerage when he became the Duke of Wellington.

Genius and Reason; An Uncommon Combination

The Duke of Wellington's prosecution of the Peninsular War smacks of military genius. He did not enjoy parity of numbers until 1813, five years into the conflict, yet he not only avoided defeat during that time, but also made remarkable progress against the veteran French armies. To be sure, the British general had help, not the least of which came from the French marshals. A sniping and jealous group, they bungled many opportunities to unite and crush the allies because of petty envy and adolescent intrigues.⁸ Wellington, thanks to his intelligence network, usually knew of the movements of the separate French forces and retired quickly when they infrequently united. Additionally, as the war progressed, Napoleon removed large numbers of troops from Iberia, especially before his march to Moscow in 1812. Conversely, the British, buoyed by both their army's intermittent success and Napoleon's setbacks, finally began to reinforce significantly the peninsular army.

By 1813, at the start of the allied push to the Pyrenees, they actually outnumbered the French in the field. Even though King Joseph's various armies numbered 230,000 in early 1813, many of these soldiers needed to occupy the hostile countryside, garrison the cities and perform other ancillary duties that kept them out of the field formations. The duke, on the other hand, could put as many men into the

field as his commissaries could support. The fact remains, however, that the allies were hugely outnumbered for five years. Yet they and their general endured. He probed and tested but refused to engage decisively the numerically superior French unless at the time and place of his own choosing, as at Vimiero, Bussaco and Salamanca. The field marshal fought a war of attrition waiting patiently for the emperor to deplete his own forces.

Coalition Warrior

Sir Arthur possessed an attitude and philosophy aptly suited to his situation as commander of a multi-national force. In the Peninsula, as in India, the field marshal commanded several different forces, speaking several different languages, intent on several different purposes. One could scarcely expect the Iron Duke to manage a decent military parade from such a hodge-podge, yet by carefully culling his officer corps for acceptable generals and colonels who fit into the Wellington mold, he managed his coalitions to victory. Coalition warfare requires the coalition commander to trust and believe his alliance can achieve victory. The nucleus of the alliance must also trust in the competence of the commander. A successful coalition operation requires these two conditions. As they were

present in World War II with Eisenhower and the Persian Gulf War with Schwarzkopf, so too with Wellington. As a young colonel in India, Sir Arthur successfully formed two alliances, the first with the Nizam of Hyderabad against the Mysoreans and the second with a number of princely states against the Mahrattas. He learned in the subcontinent always to keep a nucleus of seasoned and thoroughly reliable troops (usually British) under his direct control. In Iberia the Anglo-Portuguese coalition alternately flourished and waned throughout 1808 and 1809. After Talavera, however, the bilateral trust crucial to the success of the joint force grew and cemented the alliance. It was the Anglo-Portuguese army that provided the seasoned, reliable core during the lean years before 1813.

Besides trust, patience and diplomacy form important components of successful alliances. The duke possessed an abundance of both, but not enough to overcome the titanic egos of the Spanish generals. No amount of coaxing or cajoling could move the Spanish to follow any plan framed by anyone other than one of their own. Aggrieved because Wellington would subscribe to neither Spanish tactics nor authority, the Anglo-Spanish martial union did not happen until the Spanish *Junta* appointed him Generalissimo of the Spanish armies on 22 September 1812. Thereafter the allied army was, in fact, Wellington's army.

Tactics

The field marshal generally adhered to the tactical norms of the day. He was not an experimenter. An infantry commander, the duke believed in the cavalry, artillery and engineers as ancillary branches whose purpose was to assist and augment the operations of the foot soldiers. He distilled the best of General David Dundas' *Rules and Regulations for the movement of His Majesty's Infantry*, discipline and drill, and applied it remorselessly.⁹ The infantry weapon of the day was the notoriously inaccurate musket, but at four rounds per minute, a thin red line could certainly produce a lethal wall of lead. Wellington understood that fact, and so he drilled his units until they were exhausted, and then he drilled them some more. He emphasized not fancy maneuvers but repeated formation into line from column and interminable musket drill. His soldiers needed to perform almost automatically. This performance, matched to the discipline that is the hallmark of British infantry, made the 33rd in India and, later, the peninsular army virtually unbeatable.

As support for infantry, the cavalry and artillery performed useful service. The cavalry anchored the flanks of his defensive formations and exploited enemy retreats by pursuit. Wellington liked to have cavalry buttress his defensive wings because in that role they augmented his

infantry. As pursuers, he found them less satisfactory. In almost every charge they lost control of their formations and went galloping off into the countryside providing little support for the force as a whole. Even as late as 1815 a cavalry assault at Waterloo went out of control. The Union and Household Brigades charged forward heroically and restored the lines that Napoleon's troops had bulged, but they did not stop there. They continued forward: "all dash," wrote a young officer, until they found themselves caught in the enemy rear, where the French cut them off and massacred them.¹⁰ The Scots Greys lost 297 of their 300 men and, in all, Wellington lost over 2,500 cavalymen in that one charge.

The duke had somewhat better experience with the artillery. Throughout his peninsular campaigns he utilized more and more cannon to greater and greater effect. The influx of dependable, well-manufactured iron guns from England made his increased use of artillery possible. The hybrid batteries he had to employ before 1812 lacked a standard caliber and proved of questionable quality. But as his batteries became standardized, he no longer had to transport a virtual warehouse of artillery ammunition to supply many different caliber guns and could better utilize his limited transport to bring more and more guns to the battlefield.

Finally, the duke mastered logistics. He understood the connection between supply and performance in the field. A well-fed, well-clothed, well-armed force, given discipline and leadership, ought to beat one lacking those essentials. Wellington knew that better than any other general of his era. Napoleon certainly never concerned himself overly with the welfare of his troops. He had a nearly inexhaustible supply of privates. The duke usually faced armies greatly superior in numbers, and so he had to work to husband his soldiers as best he could. Woe to the commissary who failed to deliver rations. Heaven help the officer who did not properly house his soldiers whenever possible. Wellington's redcoats not only believed that he would lead them to victory with as few casualties as possible, but that he also would take care of their essential needs while doing so. The newly-promoted Segeant Wheeler wrote:

If England should require the service of her army again, and I should be with it, let me have "Old Nosey" to command. Our interests would be sure to be looked into, we should never have occasion to fear an enemy. There are two things we should be certain of. First, we should always be as well supplied with rations as the nature of the service would admit. The second is we should be sure to give the enemy a d ----d good thrashing. What can a soldier desire more.¹¹

Intelligence

The field marshal's success in his limited operations between 1808 and 1813 owed in part to the intelligence

network he established. A sympathetic populace contributed critically to that intelligence system. Operating in a friendly environment enabled Sir Arthur to nurture thousands of part-time information sources. The French, by contrast, battled day and night with a nation of fifth columnists. Further, Wellington's relationship with the guerrillas proved extremely beneficial as well to British intelligence efforts. The guerrillas waged myriad, constant little campaigns against them, rarely allowing them to rest. While the guerrillas slaked their thirst for vengeance against the hated French by killing the messengers who streamed between French armies, Wellington received the dispatches and communiques taken from the bodies of the unfortunate messengers. Finally, not only was communication between France and Spain always harassed, but the British commander was able to glean, time and again, the intentions of the French, courtesy of the captured messages.

Wellington and his Staff

Wellington insisted on doing everything for himself, a strength, but also a weakness. He conducted personal reconnaissance whenever possible. All orders issued directly from him. Every aspect of every operation, down to the smallest detail he made his responsibility alone. He refused

to delegate. One of the most basic of all military tenets, however, is that a commander should train and develop subordinates. Wellington failed to do that. If he had been killed during the course of the Peninsular War, before 1813, it is doubtful that any of Wellington's lieutenants could have come forward to lead the army competently. The Iron Duke never trained his subordinate commanders or staff to operate with initiative.

As a matter of fact, he often castigated subordinates who acted of their own volition. When Doctor James McGrigor, Wellington's chief inspector of hospitals, changed the evacuation route for the wounded after the battle of Salamanca, the duke flew into a rage:

I shall be glad to know who is to command the army? I or you? I establish one route. . .you establish another, and order the commissariat and the supplies by that line. As long as you live, Sir, never do so again; never do anything without my orders.¹²

This insistence on control in part accounted for the notorious failure of his armies to pursue fleeing enemies. Lieutenant Colonel William Tomkinson averred that the field marshal was jealous of any British success outside of his immediate purview: "Lord Wellington may not like to entrust officers with detachments to act according to circumstances, and I am quite clear if he approves of much success, excepting under his own immediate eye."¹³

One must temper Colonel Tomkinson's sentiment with the proven indisciplined performance of Wellington's cavalry, of

which Tomkinson was a part, and the often inferior quality of the British officer corps. Many men entered the army because, as second or third sons of noblemen, they had no other place to go. Wellington proved himself one of the few exceptions in the army of that era. Few officers applied themselves as diligently and tirelessly to excellence. One of the reasons the duke did everything for himself was to protect his men from the incompetence of many of the officers assigned to lead them.

A member of the Third Dragoons, Captain William Bragge penned a succinct assessment of the field marshal's dilemma with respect to his officers. After the retreat from Burgos Wellington had thrown a stinging remonstrance at his subordinates in the form of a *Circular to Officers Commanding Divisions and Brigades* (See Note #2). The London newspapers got hold of it, and, of course, and perhaps with glee, published it without permission. Bragge wrote:

I was very sorry to see Lord Wellington's Letter to his Generals commanding Brigades and Divisions [of 28th Nov.] at full length in the rascally London Newspapers with suitable remarks by the Editors, one of whom coolly observes the Army was in a state of Mutiny and the Retreat more dreadful than that of the French through Russia. My own opinion is that Lord Wellington never wished or intended the aforesaid Letter to be published, nor was it, I believe, in many instances read to the Troops but to the Officers only. It was perhaps rather too violent and never would have been necessary had his Lordship proper General Officers under him or Men of his own choosing. At present the Ministers or Duke of York order out a batch of Generals, who in general have neither Talent nor Experience. Some blunder is committed, Lord Wellington

speaks his mind, the Great Man is offended or probably sulky at being crossed, and he never bothers to exert himself or act upon his own Judgement again. Here I think commences a slackness which is quickly felt throughout the whole Machine, occasions incalculable Mischief and has induced Lord Wellington to call this 'God Almighty's Army' a thousand times.

Except General Hill there is scarcely a General Officer in this Army of any Talent and very few of any Activity except Sir S. Cotton and I suppose no commander ever had so few clever Men on his Staff almost all of them being coxcomical or Old Women, amongst the latter I include Col. Gordon, who - I believe - has returned to England after doing considerable Mischief instead of saving several Millions a Year, for which purpose he was sent out.¹⁴

The Consummate Field Marshal

With Vitoria, Wellington had come full circle. From the defense at Boxtel, the audacious assault at Assaye, the stand at Torres Vedras, to the overwhelming of King Joseph, the duke displayed absolute command of whatever battlefield milieu in which he found himself. The only blemish on his record related to sieges, and even there he can hardly be called a loser.

Wellington came to Iberia as an offensive general, comfortable in the belief that his Indian experiences would easily transfer to the new theater of operations. He had analyzed the French tactics and was certain he could defeat them. Circumstances forced him to become a more cautious general, a master of the defense. That experience, combined

with the mixed success of the siege campaign, enabled him to grow beyond the strictly offensive or defensive forms of generalship and become a field marshal in every sense of the word. The duke once said, "I look upon Salamanca, Vitoria and Waterloo as my best battles. . . ." Audaciousness, alacrity and risk went into all three of those actions. Not coincidentally Salamanca and Vitoria occurred after his siege campaign of 1812. The field marshal's education was complete.

Many historians portray Waterloo as the centerpiece of Wellington's career. It was certainly an event of great significance in the course of European history, especially since it finally pitted Wellington against Napoleon. Yet the battle itself offered no new tactics or challenges. As the duke himself said: "Napoleon did not maneuver at all. He just moved forward in the old style and was driven off in the old style."¹⁵

ENDNOTES

Notes to the Introduction

1. J. Holland Rose, The Life of Napoleon I (New York, 1913), I, 452.
2. Michael Glover, Wellington as Military Commander (London, 1968), 13.
3. Captain John Kincaid, Adventures in the Rifle Brigade (London, 1830). Kincaid was a member of the 95th Rifles, a unit that served with particular distinction in the Peninsular War.
4. Lady Elizabeth Longford, Wellington: The Years of the Sword (London, 1969), 13-14.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. There is no certifiable way to prove this as Wellington's birth date; it is a matter of some confusion because parish records at St. Peter's in Dublin, the family church, list 30 April as Arthur's baptismal date. The Duke's birth date is not critical to the substance of my discussion so, like Lady Longford in Wellington: The Years of the Sword and Philip Guedalla in The Duke (London, 1931), I defer to the duke who maintained in favor of 1 May.
2. Longford, Wellington: The Years of the Sword, 19.
3. Sir Herbert Maxwell, The Life of Wellington: The Restoration of the Martial Power of Great Britain (London, 1899), 4.
4. Maxwell, Life of Wellington, 4. Wellington is generally credited with: "The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton." Lady Longford believes it an improbable accreditation citing the duke's brief tenure at Eton and his apparent indifference to the institution.

5. Alexis Henri Brialmont and the Rev. G.R. Gleig, History of the Life of Arthur, Duke of Wellington (London, 1862), I, 6.
6. The chroniclers of the duke vary considerably concerning the exact nature of Angers. Some, Gleig for instance, intimate that the Royal Academy was a military academy. Others, like Lady Longford believe that, while more than a riding school, Angers was an alternative to university for the high born.
7. John Timbs, Wellingtoniana: Anecdotes, Maxims and Characteristics of the Duke of Wellington (London, 1852), 7.
8. The artillery and engineer corps fell under the jurisdiction of the Master General of the Ordnance, a department outside the authority of the Commander-in-Chief of the army. The more technical natures of these branches demanded a rudimentary proficiency in mathematics and certain sciences. Unlike the rest of the army, the Ordnance branches did have formal professional schooling, at Woolwich, and promotion by seniority. Unfortunately, they adhered so rigidly to the seniority system that promotions proceeded at a tortuously slow pace because the upper ranks were generally populated by geriatrics and invalids. Like the regular branches, the Ordnance branches had no provisions for retirement and the career officer was, for want of income, employed until his death. This, of course, left little room for promotion and discouraged many young officers from entering the technical branches.
9. Louis Jennings, ed., The Croker Papers: The Correspondence and Diaries of the Late Right Honourable John Wilson Croker, LL.D., F.R.S., Secretary to the Admiralty, 1809 to 1830 (London, 1884) Vol. 1, 337n. December, 1826.
10. Jennings, Croker Papers, I, 337.
11. Aide-de-camp duty was prestigious though not the best training for future leaders. This position was a particularly good one. Arthur's brother Richard had engineered the assignment at considerable effort.
12. John Marius Wilson, A Memoir of Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington with Notices of his Associates and Opponents (London, Edinburgh & Dublin, 1856?) Vol 1, p 9. The conversation, as related, seems too conveniently prophetic. The exchange is not cited and one must keep in mind that the Memoir was assembled after the duke's death. Having examined two of Wesley's speeches from the Irish Parliament, however, I have no reservation averring that he was, at the least, an adequate public speaker.

13. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 34.
14. The Dutch campaigns of 1794-95 were, charitably, a debacle. The Commander in Chief, the Duke of York, led an army through many months of defeat and retreat. Britain's army, never the powerful force possessed by the continental countries, was woefully inadequate to the task of facing a French army that could swarm huge numbers of soldiers on the field. Britain's effort to eject the French from Holland, especially from the Scheldt basin, was an abysmal failure. Napoleon's list of successes never included an invasion of the British Isles although he considered it. With naval parity it might have and the French occupation of the 'cockpit of Europe' would have been an excellent invasion base.
15. G. N. Wright, Life and Campaigns of Arthur, Duke of Wellington (London & Paris, 18__?) 13ff.
16. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 39.
17. Second Duke of Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, XIII, 2-3. Letter to Sir C. Fortescue, 20 December 1794.
18. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 38.
19. Philip, 5th Earl of Stanhope, Notes of Conversations with the Duke of Wellington, 1831-1851 (New York, 1973). 182; 12 October 1839. This is a reprint of the original 1888 edition of the Earl of Stanhope's reminiscences. He seemed to have an uncanny ability to pull information from the usually reticent duke.
20. Michael Glover, Peninsular Preparation: The Reform of the British Army, 1795-1809 (Cambridge, 1963), 3. General Count Walmoden, the Duke of York's successor, wrote to him, now exiled to the warmth and comfort of England in February, that the British troop formations were shattered and the troops destroyed but, happily, the carriages and baggage of the officers was safe. The actual text of the letter avers that the English army was ". . . detruite. . . les officers, les equipages, les trains immense, cela est rest pendant que la misère et les malades ont detruites les individus combattens."
21. The army of 1795 depended upon the legacy of Marlborough to sustain itself. That legacy was past. Sir Herbert Maxwell quotes Wesley's disdain of the old order from the de Ros manuscript: "There was a fellow called Hammerstein, who was considered the chief authority in the army for tactics but was quite an imposter; in fact, no one knew anything about the management of an army, though many of the regiments were excellent: the 33rd was in as good order as possible."

Manuscript notes of the recollections of William, 29th Baron de Ros, on conversations he had with the Duke of Wellington from 1836-1840 from Maxwell, Life of Wellington, 14-15.

22. Stanhope, Conversations, 182, 12 October 1839.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Philip Guedalla, Wellington (New York and London, 1931) 47.
2. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 7.
3. Maxwell, Life of Wellington, 21.
4. Wilson, Memoir, 13 and J.W. Fortescue, History of the British Army (London, 1910), IV, 477. Wesley held General Abercromby in high esteem. Indicative of his character is that when he received the wound that cost him his life he asked what sort of pillow was being given him: "What is that you are placing under my head?" "Only a soldier's blanket." answered Lieutenant John Macdonald. "Only a soldier's blanket!" retorted the general; "a soldier's blanket is of great consequence, and you must send me the name of the soldier to whom it belongs, that it may be returned to him." That was the General's last order and it was obeyed. (Fortescue, IV, 843-844).
5. Glover, Commander, 20. Also, Colonial Office Document No. 318/ 11-15 and War Office Document No. 1/31; Pp. 1, 29 & 359.
6. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 41.
7. Jac Weller, Wellington in India (London, 1972), 1-12.
8. Guedalla, Wellington, 54-65. The author compares Wellington's library with that of Napoleon. While the comparison is interesting, I thought it more important to list, from Mr. Guedalla's book, a representative sample of the Duke's library: Richardson's Persian Dictionary, Herbelot's Bibliotèque Orientale, Volney's Travels, "Reports: Secret and Select Committees", Blackstone's Commentaries, Verelst India Affairs, Bolt's India Affairs, Orme's Indostan, Locke's works, Smith's Wealth of Nations, Raynal's Histoire des Indes, Account of the Siege of Mangalore, British India Analysed, Moore's narrative of Little's Detachment, Dundas' Cavalry Tactics, Histoire d'Hyder Ali, and Cambridge's War in India.

9. Robert R. Pearce, Memoirs and Correspondence of the Most Noble Richard Marquess Wellesley, K.P., K.G., D.C.L. (London, 1846), 3 Vols., 307-308. After Weller, Wellington in India, 8.
10. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, I, 4. Letter to his brother Richard, the Earl of Mornington, on 17 April 1797.
11. India was a repository for senior army generals. See War Office Document Nos. 25/3215-3219. Many of these officers had no desire to be part of expeditions or campaigns.
12. Weller, Wellington in India, 7. The officers of the regular units serving in India were held in higher regard, at least by the Horse Guards, than were the officers of the units stationed there permanently. (Because of the purchase system, it was not unusual for a young colonel of a regular regiment, like Wesley, to be ten or more years junior to the captains of the Company units. For obvious reasons this created friction between the regular units rotating in and out of India on temporary duty and those permanently assigned there). Arthur Wesley, as a colonel in a regular unit, carried considerable prestige in India. That explains why the young officer was allowed to enforce all but the most intrusive of his regulations while the 33rd sailed to the Philippines.
13. From September, 1795, the date of their first attempt to sail with Abercromby, through December of 1797, their date of return from the expedition to Manila.
14. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, I, 19-25. *The Regimental Orders For On Board Ship* were written by Wesley in July 1797.
15. The reconnaissance I allude to here is mentioned in Mr. Weller's book, pages 14-17. Furthermore, Wesley showed his knowledge of the area in a letter to his brother, the governor general, in July, 1798. The letter, "Memorandum Respecting Collecting an Army in the Barahmahal." (Supplementary Dispatches, I, 55-67), reveals a knowledge of details that could only have been gleaned by personal inspection. For instance: "The works of Chinroyen Droog must be repaired again. Those of Sankerry Droog the same. Kistnagherry ought to be fortified upon an improved plan, in the same manner as Ryacotta. In this last the works have been much contracted." (56).
16. See again Philip Guedalla, Wellington, 57-58. The list includes many accounts of British experience in India notably "Account of the Siege of Mangalore", "British India Analysed", and "McKenzie's War in Mysore".

17. Franklin and Mary Wickwire, Cornwallis: The Imperial Years (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1980) 117-177.
18. Fortescue, History of the Army, IV, 714-717.
19. Unlike Great Britain, France had a professional training institution for military officers. Located at Brienne, the French academy provided cadets with instruction in classics, science, mathematics, tactics and strategy. The French, therefore, had a pool of professionally trained officers available for duty with willing colonial armies. Ironically, Napoleon Bonaparte was in attendance at Brienne at the same time that Wesley was at the Royal Academy of Equitation at Angers.
20. Wickwire and Wickwire, Cornwallis: The Imperial Years, 121 and Weller, Wellington, 15; 299-300.
21. In 1791, General Cornwallis had marched westward through Vellore, across the Baramahal region and over the eastern mountains. The Baramahal is an area that lies between the Carnatic and Mysore. A string of mountains, sometimes called the Ghauts, flank India's central plain on both the east and west sides of the subcontinent. They provide a significant barrier to the south central tableland of the country, wherein lies most of Mysore. Once beyond the mountains, Cornwallis captured Bangalore for use as a forward operating/logistics base for the final push to Seringapatam, the heavily fortified capital. Logistics difficulties prevented the capture of Seringapatam that year, but the British general returned in the spring of 1792 and took it. See Wickwire and Wickwire, Cornwallis, The Imperial Years, Chapters 7 and 8.
22. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, I, 55-60. *Memorandum Respecting Collecting An Army In The Baramahal*, July 1798, to the governor general: and *Memorandum Upon The Baramahal*, 18 July 1798. Both of these memoranda refer to the strategic value Wesley placed on free transit through the Baramahal region.
23. Colonel G.F.R. Henderson, The Science of War: A Collection of Essays and Lectures, 1891-1903 (London, New York, Bombay and Calcutta, 1913) 88.
24. Maxwell, Life of Wellington, 21-22.
25. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, I, 17-18. 12 July 1797.
26. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 53-54. Longford discusses Mornington's purposes for the change of

name. Basically Mornington desired to be created the more traditional Marquess Wellesley instead of Marquess Wesley.

27. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, I, 51-52, dated 19 May 1798. Lady Longford cites a letter addressed to General Harris of the same date as this one. She is probably referring to the same correspondence.

28. Weller, Wellington in India, 21.

29. Weller, Wellington in India, 24.

30. Fortescue, History of the Army, IV, 713-714. When a neighboring region attacked Hyderabad several years earlier, the Nizam had requested help from the Company. Sir John Shore refused the request, alienating a potential ally.

31. Sir Charles Petrie, Wellington, A Reassessment (London, 1856), 15-19.

32. Fortescue, History of the Army, IV, 720-725. Actually, the Nizam was afraid to discharge his republican mercenaries, fearing that the Frenchmen would mutiny. It required the presence of six battalions of John Company infantry, with their supporting artillery, to convince the French officers that an immediate departure was in their best interest.

33. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, I, 84. Letter, dated 19 August 1798, to his brother, Henry.

34. Lord Monson and George Leveson Gower, eds., Memoirs of George Elers, Captain of the 12th Regiment of Foot (1777-1842) (New York, 1903) 82-84. The duel, the second Ashton fought that day, was over what seems today to be a ridiculous matter of honor.

35. Monson and Gower, Elers Memoirs, 84.

36. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, I, 141. 20 December 1798. Characteristic of the compassion he felt but found so difficult to either display or voice is his dispatch of 6 January 1799, in which he worried over how the news of Ashton's death would be sent to Mrs. Ashton, (see Supplementary Dispatches, I, 160-163. 6 January, 1799).

37. Wickwire and Wickwire, Cornwallis: The Imperial Years, 146-153.

38. Wickwire and Wickwire, Cornwallis: The Imperial Years, 157.

39. Wellington, Supplementary Despatches, I, 170-185. Wellesley was always deeply involved in the problems of transport. He developed a preference for the white Mysore bullock as the strongest and hardiest available.
40. Weller, Wellington in India, 39.
41. S.R. Lushington, The Life and Services of General Lord George Harris, G.C.B., Baron of Seringapaptam and Mysore, during his campaigns in America, the West Indies and India (London, 1840). Letter from General Harris to the Earl of Mornington, January 1799.
42. Wellington, Supplementary Despatches, I, 199. Letter of 27 February 1799 to Lord Mornington.
43. Wellington, Supplementary Despatches, I, 199. 27 February, 1799.
44. Fortescue, History of the Army, IV, Part II, 725.
45. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 57.
46. Weller, Wellington in India, 46.
47. Wellington, Supplementary Despatches, I, 192. Letter of 4 February 1799 to Lord Mornington.
48. Weller, Wellington in India, 304. The serpentine progress of Harris' army is best seen in this map.
49. Weller, Wellington in India, 49-50. Of the 57 British casualties, 20 were killed. Although battle figures are difficult to determine, the British reports of 500 Mysorean dead do not seem exorbitantly high. The 33rd fired one volley of seven hundred rounds. The routed Indians were further attacked by General Floyd's cavalry. I do not believe the figure to be grossly inflated.
50. Wilson, Memoir, 20.
51. Weller, Wellington in India, 55.
52. Paddy Griffith, ed., Wellington: Commander (Sussex & London, 1985) 26.
53. Michael Glover, Peninsular Preparation (Cambridge, 1963) 114.
54. That rate of fire, 6 to 8 volleys per minute, was as heavy as that delivered by most three-deep lines. In exceptionally well trained units, like the 33rd, the two-deep line offered

the advantage of covering a wider area than did the three-deep formations while still maintaining the lethal volume of fire that was the key to British success throughout the early and mid-nineteenth-century.

55. Weller, Wellington in India, 59. The area of the encampment was at the old village of Nova Shafer.

56. Weller, Wellington in India, 97. British successes in siegecraft in India were made possible by a combination of British discipline and deficient Indian forts. "The walls were frequently no more than twelve feet tall in places, with poorly designed loopholes and no means of delivering flanking fire." The generally positive results the British experienced in the sieges they executed in India were deceptive. When Wellington led the British effort in the peninsula he encountered fortresses built in the tradition of Vauban. The Spanish forts were bigger, stronger and more easily defensible. Siegecraft was, for Wellington, an experience of constant learning.

57. This is a literal extract from General Harris' diary as recounted in Wellington's Despatches, I, 23.

58. Wellington, Despatches, I, 23. 5 April 1799.

59. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, I, 209. Letter of 18 April 1799, to the Earl of Mornington. Much later, after he had won his immortality in Iberia, the Duke of Wellington wrote to an officer in the process of revising the duke's Despatches. Wellington remembered:

The truth is what I had stated. We had not reconnoitered the ground. The Tope was on the enemy's side of the nullah, in this way [The Duke's hand-drawn sketch follows].

I had carried the nullah quite up to mark 'O'. My advance guard under Capt. West of the 33d was beyond it and through the tope and lost Prisoners on the Enemy side of it. In fact, we knew nothing about the matter. (Maxwell, Life of Wellington, 414. A reproduction of the Duke's actual letter, with the sketch, is in Maxwell, 32.).

60. Diary of Lieutenant-General Harris as reproduced in Despatches, I, 23-24. The excerpt included therein carries entries for 4 through 8 April 1799. Others also recorded Wellesley's disturbed frame of mind. Monson and Gower, Memoirs of Captain Elers, 101-102. Captain Elers goes into great detail about how Wellesley fell on the dining table in the general's mess and went to sleep when he found that Harris was already in bed. Jac Weller and Lady Longford both discount

this version. It is improbable that Harris was asleep during an operation in which no fewer than four battalions took part. Further, my overall perception of Elers is that while amusing, he was little more than a gossip.

61. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 63. Lady Longford cites a letter from Wellesley to Knight of Kerry, dated 18 April 1799, in the National Library of Ireland.

62. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, I, 210. Letter to Maurice Fitzgerald, Esq., April 1799.

63. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, I, 209. Letter of 18 April 1799, to Lord Mornington.

64. Maxwell, Life of Wellington, 36-40.

65. Weller, Wellington in India, 132ff.

66. Date of promotion: 29 April 1802. He was not informed of his advancement until 26 September 1802. Speed was not the hallmark of early nineteenth century communication between India and Great Britain.

67. Weller, Wellington in India, 170-174, 171n. The European noncommissioned officers and officers of Scindia's army were more mercenary than the politically installed French. Many of them were Germans, recently unemployed by French successes on the continent.

68. These were probably 12-pounders and were in addition to the 6-pounders that were routinely assigned to regular infantry units.

69. Troop strength figures, like casualty returns are difficult to determine. According to Fortescue (History of the British Army, V, 15, 24.) Wellesley's division strength at the start of the war was approximately 11,153. Colonel Stevenson's beginning strength was about 9,459. These figures include infantry, cavalry, artillery, pioneers and engineers. Fortescue computed officer strength as an additional one-eighth of the enlisted total. An estimate of 12,000 total, i.e. 7,000 in Wellesley's division and 5,000 in the more cautious Stevenson's division is reasonable after almost six months of campaign.

70. Gurwood, Despatches, I, 401. Letter to Lieutenant Colonel Munro, 1 November 1803.

71. Gurwood, Despatches, I, 401.

72. Gurwood, Despatches, I, 391. "Memorandum on the Battle of Assaye". Date listed as 'Subsequently transmitted'. This document follows a number of letters sent out on 24 September 1803 to report the victory.

73. Gurwood, Dispatches, I, xxvii (*Explanation of Indian Terms, Titles, and Countries which occur in this Work*). Gurwood defines hircarrahs [sic] as "Messengers employed to carry letters, generally brahmins. They are sent also to gain intelligence, and used as guides." Wellington's use of indigenous people as information sources did not end with this episode in which the natives were in error. On the contrary, the hircarrahs formed the model for the intelligence system he used to such profit in Iberia between 1808-1814. The Indian paradigm is later seen with the hircarrahs replaced by the peasants, brigands and local strongmen of Spain and Portugal. Much of the credit for Wellington's successes in India and, later, the Peninsular War is directly attributable to the intelligence networks he developed among the civilian populations.

74. Jennings, ed. The Croker Papers, I, 99-100.

75. Jennings, ed., Croker Papers, I, 392.

76. Stanhope, Conversations with the Duke, 49. Lord Stanhope's recollection of a discourse of 23 January 1834.

77. Weller, Wellington in India, 176.

78. Gurwood, Despatches, I, 403. Letter to Lieut. Col. Munro, 1 November 1803.

79. Gurwood, Despatches, II, 623.

80. Fortescue, History of the Army, V, 28.

81. Gurwood, Despatches, II, 403. Letter to Stevenson, 12 October 1803.

82. Wellington, Dispatches, I, 403-4. ". . . instead of that [Colonel Orrock] led directly upon [Assaye]: the 74th, which were on the right of the first line, followed the piquets, and the great loss we sustained was in these two bodies."

83. Field Marshal Lord Michael Carver, The Seven Ages of the British Army (New York, 1984), 88. Also, Gurwood, Despatches, Vol I, 388: "The Return of the Killed, Wounded, and Missing of the Detachment of the Army under the Command of Major-General the Hon. A. Wellesley at the Battle of Assaye, against the Army of Dowlut Rao Scindiah, on the 23rd September, 1803."

	F.O.	Cap.	Europeans Sub.	Serj	Drum	R.& F.
Horses						
Killed 77	1	3	7	9	-	141
Wounded 3	3	6	20	33	6	343
Missing -	-	-	-	-	-	8

	-	Subi.	Natives Jem.	Havil.	Trum.	R.& F.
Horses						
Killed 228		5	3	13	-	224
Wounded 75		12	16	39	6	1138
Missing 1		-	-	-	-	18

84. Gurwood, Despatches, III, 330.

85. See the returns in the note above. The figures for the 74th are; 124 killed and 277 wounded. The pickets, which were company-sized units detached from battalions for a day of picket duty on a rotating basis, essentially disappeared.

86. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 93. Lady Longford cites an exchange between George Chad, a career diplomat, and the duke in The Conversations of the First Duke of Wellington with George William Chad (Cambridge, 1956) 20, as edited by the Seventh Duke of Wellington.

87. Gurwood, Despatches, VII, 43. Letter of 19 December 1810, to Colonel Gordon.

88. Lieutenant Colonel John Gurwood, The General Orders of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington, K.G. (London, 1837), 120-200. This work is a compilation of the General Orders that governed the Peninsular Army, 1809-1814. The pages indicated deal primarily with recompense of civilians, among other things.

89. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, I, 125. Letter of 31 October 1798 to his brother, Henry Wellesley, secretary to the governor general.

90. Weller, Wellington in India, 154. Mr. Weller spent considerable time in India retracing the routes of Wellesley's campaigns and examined many of the fortresses the major general encountered. See Note #54.

91. Wellington, Supplementary Despatches, I, 1. Letter of 11 April 1797, to Major General St. Leger.
92. Weller, Wellington in India, 181.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. J. Holland Rose, William Pitt and the Great War (London, 1911), 556.
2. Fortescue, History of the British Army, V, 319-129.
3. Gurwood, Despatches, II, 616n.
4. John Fortescue, Wellington (New York, 1925), 88-90. In the expedition to Denmark the British hoped to preempt Napoleon's intended seizure of the Danish fleet. Bonaparte recognized that Britain's island security rested upon maritime supremacy. By controlling the fleets of Europe, Napoleon could overpower Britain and enforce his Continental System. Thus the British sent an expedition to Copenhagen to prevent the powerful Danish fleet from becoming a French prize.
5. Petrie, Wellington, A Reassessment, 68 and Lady Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 138.
6. David Gates, The Spanish Ulcer: A History of the Peninsular War (London and Sydney, 1986), 5-12.
7. Maxwell, Life of Wellington, 97. This small force had been originally raised for an expedition against the Spanish colonies of America.
8. Jennings, The Croker Papers, I, 12-13.
9. William Wordsworth, The Convention of Cintra (London, 1809), 49. The edition used, a facsimile of the original 1809 tract, is published by the Brigham Young University Press.
10. Gurwood, Despatches, IV, 526. Letter to Frere, 24 July 1809.
11. William Napier, A History of the War in the Peninsula (Chicago and London, 1979), xxxvii-xxxviii. This is an abridged version of Sir William's original work, entitled History of the war in the peninsula and in the south of France from the year 1807 to the year 1814 (London, 1828-40)..

12. Gurwood, Despatches, V, 230-235. This entry, entitled Memorandum on the Defence of Portugal, clearly outlines Wellesley's strategy for the Iberian campaign. The thrust of the tract is that Portugal is easily defensible against any French force of under 100,000. Further, since the campaign in the peninsula would be one of at least several years, Portugal's security, both as a logistical base and as an ally, was imperative.
13. See War Office 3/605, 1813, 79.
14. Guedalla, Wellington, 250.
15. Gates, The Spanish Ulcer, 481-530. Gates' Appendix 2 provides a very recent analysis of the French armies in Spain. He estimates that during the course of the French presence there, from 1807 to 1814, the strength fluctuated from a low of 165,120 to a maximum of 354,461 in April, 1811. At the time of Wellesley's return, spring of 1809, the French strength was close to 300,000.
16. Gates, Spanish Ulcer, 490-491. Gates' figures for Wellesley's army at Talavera are 20,641. This total is close to Oman's. The salient point is that Wellesley's force was grossly outnumbered, at least ten to one.
17. The deployment, reinforcement and recruitment of the peninsular army is an exhaustively documented subject. The best illustration of the reinforcement problem is in War Office 6/134, 1811, 115-121, "Urgent Need of Reinforcements" in Public Records Office Lists and Indexes, L III (New York, 1963).
18. Napier, History of War in the Peninsula, 102-107.
19. Glover, Wellington as Military Commander, 71.
20. Glover, Wellington as Military Commander, 148.
21. Robert S. Quimby, The Background of Napoleonic Warfare: The Theory of Military Tactics in Eighteenth-Century France (New York, 1957) This volume is #596 in the Columbia Studies in the Social Sciences, edited by the faculty of the Department of Political Science, Columbia University.
22. Gates, Spanish Ulcer, 176.
23. The battle of Talavera was a resounding allied victory. Because of poor cooperation and coordination between the British and Spanish commanders, however, the battle was precursor to a lengthy retreat for the Anglo-Portuguese and the destruction, in detail, of the standing Spanish army. The

poor finish to the effort at Talavera was caused by an order to Marshal Soult from Napoleon that was completely unknown to the allies. The emperor's order read, in part: "Wellesley will probably advance, by the Tagus, against Madrid. In that case, pass the mountains, fall on his flank and rear, and crush him." (Napier, History, 89.). Soult's force, the VI, V and II corps, over 50,000 troops, was bearing down on the allies from the north even before the action at Talavera. Wellesley's recommendation to Cuesta, with regard to a threat from the north, had been to detach a mixed cavalry and infantry force of 10,000 to screen the north and west. The screen would provide early warning of any impending attack from those directions. Cuesta, as was his wont, disregarded Wellesley's recommendation and sent only a token force that failed to detect the huge French formation until the allies were threatened with annihilation. The standard criticism of Wellesley is that he could have deployed his own screen. But he had fewer than 3,000 horse (Gates, Spanish Ulcer, 490-1) and they were needed to anchor his flank, a requirement Cuesta did not share.

24. Napier, History of the War in the Peninsula, 92, for union of Sebastiani's force with Victor's; see Gates, Spanish Ulcer, 491-2, for troop strengths.

25. Napier, History of War in the Peninsula, 94. Wellesley had argued, fruitlessly, for Cuesta to behave more proactively. Cuesta stalled for over a week but when Wellesley actually begged for cooperation Cuesta relented, giving overall command of the combined armies to the British commander in chief. Cuesta's remark, recorded by Sir William, was that even though he had yielded command, "He had made the Englishman go down on his knees."

26. Maxwell, Life of Wellington, 164-6.

27. Napier, History of War in the Peninsula, 97.

28. Wellington, Supplementary Dispatches, VI, 431. Letter to Major Barclay, 3 December 1809.

29. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 208-210.

30. Donald D. Horward, ed. and tr., The French Campaign in Portugal, 1810-1811: An Account by Jean Jacques Pelet (Minneapolis, 1973), 4. This is the edited memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Pelet, aide-de-camp to Marshal Massena, during the incursions of the Army of Portugal against the Anglo-Portuguese army in Portugal.

31. Donald D. Horward, Napoleon and Iberia - The Twin Sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, 1810 (Tallahassee [University of Florida], 1984), 52. This order was actually transmitted to Massena by General Alexander Berthier, Napoleon's Chief of Staff.
32. Horward, Napoleon and Iberia, 28.
33. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 208-10.
34. Gurwood, Despatches, V, 230-235. *Memorandum for Lieut. Colonel Fletcher, Commanding Royal Engineers* dated 20 October 1809.
35. Gurwood, Despatches, IV, 261-263 and V, 230-235. *Memorandum to Lord Castlereagh*, 7 March 1809. Note that Sir Arthur sent this document to Castlereagh *eighteen months* before Massena was refused Lisbon by the Lines of Torres Vedras.
36. Oman, History of the Peninsular War (Oxford, 1903), III, 286. Sir Charles cites Moore's letter of 25 November 1808 to Lord Castlereagh.
37. Oman, History of the Peninsular War, 287n. Sir Charles cites Wellington's correspondence to Lord Liverpool on 2 April 1810.
38. Horward, Napoleon in Iberia, 80-173; 249-298.
39. Oman, History of the Peninsular War, III, 352-3.
40. Charles Oman, History of the Peninsular War, III, 377. Sir Charles cites Foy's diary, 103-104.
41. Napoleon, himself, following Talavera, recognized the folly of his heretofore successful columns. "As long as they will attack good troops, like the English, in good positions, without making sure they can be carried, my men will be led to death to no purpose." (Napoleon, Correspondence de Napoleon Ier, Vol XIX, 379-380. Quoted, in English, in Gates, Spanish Ulcer, 236-236.
42. Horward, Pelet, 219-225.
43. Horward, Napoleon in Iberia, 28-30.
44. According to Roger Parkinson's The Peninsular War (London, 1973) the number of French actually present at the Lines was something close to 60,000, even though Massena had begun with over 138,000 troops (p 109).

45. Gates, Spanish Ulcer, 481-530. Appendix 2, "Select List of Peninsular War Armies and their Strengths."

46. Oman, History of the Peninsular War, III, 377-386.

47.	<u>British</u> <u>Strength/Casualties</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>French</u> <u>Strength/Casualties</u>	<u>%</u>
Vimiero	18,000/720	4%	14,000/2,000	14%
Talavera	50,000/5,000	10%	50,000/7,000	14%
Bussaco	52,000/1250	2.5%	65,000/5000	8%
Fuentes de Oñoro	37,000/1500	4%	47,000/2200	5%

48. An example of the French reticence is the several days they took to probe tentatively at Wellington's smaller force prior to the battle of Salamanca.

49. Horward, Pelet, 194-196.

50. General Maximilien Sebastien Foy, History of War in the Peninsula (London, 1829), 229.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Oman, Wellington's Army, 279.

2. Brigadier B.P. McHugh, British Smooth Bore Artillery, (London, 1969), 121.

3. Glover, Wellington, Commander, 171.

4. Glover, Wellington, Commander, 173.

5. Oman, Wellington's Army, 279.

6. Gurwood, Despatches, IX, 261. Letter to Lieutenant Colonel Torrens, 7 April 1812.

7. Glover, Wellington, Commander, 186.

8. The two attempts at Badajoz in 1811 were in March and May-June. Marshal Beresford, the commander of the Portuguese contingent of the allied army, made the first attempt and Wellington the second.

9. Oman, Wellington's Army, 283.
10. Napier, History, xlv-xlvi.
11. Julia V. Page, Intelligence Officer in the Peninsula: The Letters and Diaries of Major the Honorable Edward Charles Cocks, 1786-1812 (New York & Kent, 1986), 159. Letter of 10 January 1812, to his father John, Baron Sommers.
12. Horward, Napoleon in Iberia, 173ff. The French had captured the city on 10 July 1810 after an extensive bombardment: "In all 28,286 shells and 11,859 bombs had been fired into the city during the siege." (180).
13. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 264. N.B. A breach is practicable when, in the opinion of the engineers, it can be successfully assaulted.
14. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 264. This citation appears, uncredited, in the above work. I have included it because of the confidence I have in the author's veracity, based on past experience. Furthermore, Napier, Oman and others all corroborate the time. A participant in the action, Captain William Bragge wrote: "The Surrender of Ciudad Rodrigo, which was carried by Assault last Night between the Hours of 8 and 9. . . ." S.A. Cassels, ed., Peninsular Portrait, 1811-1814: the Letters of Captain William Bragge, Third (King's Own) Dragoons (New York and Toronto, 1963), 29. This is from a letter from Captain Bragge to his father, written on the 'Afternoon, 20th January 1812.'
15. Captain B.H. Liddell Hart, ed., The Letters of Private Wheeler, 1809-1828 (London, 1951), 73-75. The cited excerpt is from a letter home dated 30 January 1812, posted from Penamacor.
16. Lieutenant Colonel Sir John T. Jones, Journals of the Sieges in Spain, 1811-1814, with Notes and Memoranda relevant to the Lines, 1810 (London, 1846), Appendix.
17. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 268.
18. Gates, Spanish Ulcer, 276. Wellington had divided his force in late summer of 1811, after the failed second siege of Badajoz. General Hill remained in the vicinity of Elvas, in Portuguese Estramadura, while Wellington hastened north toward Ciudad Rodrigo. In this manner both of the key portals of the Spanish-Portuguese border were covered by significant allied forces, well within easy reach of each other should the French threaten.

19. Hart, Letters of Private Wheeler, 74. Letter dated 30 January 1812.
20. The rugged mountain road connecting Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz prevented swift transit of artillery. Further, a cannon that could be pulled by six bullocks on flat ground required as many as twice that number to overcome the steep mountain roads between the two cities, effectively halving available transport.
21. Oman, Wellington's Army, 284.
22. Glover, Wellington, Commander, 176. The garrison of Badajoz in spring of 1812 was over 4700 as compared to the 2,500 that were present at Ciudad Rodrigo.
23. During the spring the Guadiana flooded, rendering the nearer bridges unusable and flooding all the nearby fords.
24. Glover, Wellington, Commander, 175.
25. G. Wrottesley, ed., The Life and Correspondence of Field-Marshal Sir John Burgoyne (London, 1873), Vol 1, 177. Cited from Michael Glover's Wellington, Commander, 176.
26. Jones, Sieges of the Peninsular War, I, 153.
27. Jones, Sieges of the Peninsular War, I, 71.
28. Gates, Spanish Ulcer, 336.
29. Willoughby Verner, ed., A British Rifleman: The Journals and Correspondence of Major G. Simmons (London, 1899) cited from Glover's Wellington, Commander, 177.
30. Glover, Wellington, Commander, 178.
31. Oman, History of the Peninsular War, V, 255. Letter from Wellington to Lord Liverpool dated 7 April 1812.
32. Oman, History of the Peninsular War, V, 255. Letter to Lord Liverpool, 7 April 1812.
33. The duke would later say: "I look upon Salamanca, Vitoria and Waterloo as my three best battles - those which had great and permanent consequences."
34. Glover, Wellington, Commander, 184.
35. Glover, Wellington, Commander, 183.

36. Gurwood, Despatches, IX, 436. Wellington to Paget, 20 September 1812.
37. Gurwood, Despatches, IX, 470, 5 October 1812.
38. W.H. Maxwell, Peninsular Sketches, I, 331, cited in Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 258.
39. Antony Brett-James, Wellington at War, 1794-1815: A Selection of his Wartime Letters (London, 1861) as cited in Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 296.
40. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 296-8.
41. Glover, Wellington, Commander, 181.
42. Gurwood, Despatches, IX, 566. 23 November 1812 to the Prime Minister.
43. Fortescue, History of the British Army, VIII, 583.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. Henderson, The Science of War, 99.
2. Gurwood, Despatches, IX, 582-583. The cited passage comes from *Circular to Officers Commanding Divisions and Brigades*, 28 November 1812.
3. Maxwell, Life of Wellington, 306.
4. Napier, History of the Peninsular War, V, 618, quoted in Maxwell, 308.
5. Napoleon had drained Iberia of every spare soldier for his march to Moscow which had begun in May 1812. The demands of the northern campaign also precluded reinforcements to Spain.
6. Gates, Spanish Ulcer, 386.
7. Maxwell, Life of Wellington, 313.
8. John R. Elting, Swords Around the Throne, Napoleon's Grande Armée (New York & London, 1988), Chapter 7.
9. Sir David Dundas, Rules and Regulations for the movement of His Majesty's Infantry (London, 1792). This is an abridged version of General Dundas' earlier work, Principles of Military Movements, published in 1788.

10. Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 464. Lady Longford quotes Arthur Shakespeare's bitter comments after the needless destruction of so much fine cavalry.
11. Hart, ed., The Letters of Private Wheeler, 196. Letter number 86 from Blatchington Barracks, 25 March 1816.
12. James McGrigor, The Autobiography of Sir James McGrigor, late Director-General of the Army Medical Department (London, 1861), 302. Cited in Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 291.
13. Lieutenant Colonel William Tomkinson, The Diary of a Cavalry Officer in the Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns (London, 1894), 252-253. Edited by James Tomkinson. Quoted in Longford, Wellington, The Years of the Sword, 318.
14. S. Cassels, ed., Letters of Captain Bragge, 89-90. Letter #26, to his father, 7 February 1813.
15. Owen Connelly, Blundering to Glory; Napoleon's Military Campaigns (Wilmington, Delaware, 1987) 214.

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