

At the end of the first day of battle at Gettysburg—July 1, 1863—Union lines had collapsed. Confederate troops were ecstatic and General Robert E. Lee, their leader, wanted to push forward.

Lee's second-in-command—General Longstreet—thought the best move, at that point in the battle, was to have Confederate troops stop fighting. Lee, shocked at the suggestion, reportedly said:

Do you mean, disengage?!

Longstreet reminded Lee that Confederate strategy was *defensive* (not offensive) in nature—even though the battle of Gettysburg itself was taking place in Union, not Confederate, territory.

Lee observed that the situation had changed.

Southern troops were now in Northern territory, and Union troops were on the run. Wouldn't it be better to take advantage of *that* situation?

Longstreet worried that by the next day, Union troops would be reinforced while Confederates would be greatly outnumbered. He preferred to head south—not to retreat but to redeploy—then pick a battle site of their own choosing (instead of remaining at Gettysburg where the tide of battle could turn against them).

Lee disagreed, and the Battle of Gettysburg would continue for two more days.

At the time these events took place, General Thomas ("Stonewall") Jackson—a man in whom Robert E. Lee had great confidence—had been dead less than two months. The results of this battle, and Lee's decisions, proved to be a turning point in the American Civil War.

See, also, these pictures of the Gettysburg Battle from the Library of Congress:

"Headquarters of Gen. George G. Meade on Cemetery Ridge" - photo by Alexander Gardner

"Headquarters of Gen. Robert E. Lee on the Chambersburg Pike"

"Bridge at Hanover Junction burned by Confederates before the battle of Gettysburg"

"The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter, on battle field of Gettysburg" - photo by James F. Gibson

"Bodies of Federal soldiers, killed on July 1, near the McPherson woods" - photo by Timothy O'Sullivan

"Federal dead on the right of the Federal lines, killed on July 1" - photo by James F. Gibson

"View at Trostle's barn where the 9th Massachusetts Battery was cut up" - photo by Timothy O'Sullivan

"Breastworks on Little Round Top; Round Top in distance"

"The center of the Federal position viewed from Little Round Top"

See these related videos:

Lee Reprimands Jeb Stuart at Gettysburg - End of Second Day

Chamberlain and Kilrain at Gettysburg - "Killer Angels" Monologue

Battle of Gettysburg - Union Charge

Pickett's Charge - Plan of Attack

Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg

General Armistead and the End of Pickett's Charge

Credits:

Clip from the 1993 film "Gettysburg," based on *The Killer Angels* (a book by Michael Shaara), online courtesy YouTube. Copyright, Turner Pictures, all rights reserved. Provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

Directed by:

Ronald F. Maxwell

Produced by:

Moctesuma Esparza

Robert Katz

Screenplay by:

Ronald F. Maxwell

Starring:

Martin Sheen - General **Robert E. Lee**

Tom Berenger - Lieutenant General **James Longstreet**

Jeff Daniels - Colonel **Joshua Chamberlain**

Stephen Lang - Major General **George Pickett**

Joseph Fuqua - Major General **J.E.B. Stuart**

George Lazenby - General **Johnston Pettigrew**

James Patrick Stuart - Colonel **Edward Porter Alexander**

Musical Score by:

Randy Edelman

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Lee-and-Longstreet-at-Gettysburg-End-of-First-Day>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Lee-and-Longstreet-at-Gettysburg-End-of-First-Day>