Battle Of Shiloh Essay, Research Paper

Johnston’s plan was to defeat Grant before Buell could arrive with reinforcements. He moved to attack on Apr. 3, but because of delay in the advance to the Union front, it was not until early on Apr. 6 that his troops fell upon the enemy near Shiloh Church. Grant’s position was unfortified, in spite of orders to the contrary from General Halleck, Union commander in the West. Having offensive plans of his own, Grant expected no attack, and consequently his irregularly placed divisions were thrown back in confusion at the Confederate assault (Encarta.msn.com). At a key position, known as the Hornet s Nest, 6 thousand Union troops under Prentiss and Gen. Wallace stood ground. It was called the Hornet s Nest because the sounds of the bullets flying through the air back and forth sounded like a hornet. The wall was broken when the Confederates brought 62 cannons and shot at point blank straight into the Union troops. This was the largest concentration of artillery ever assembled in North America to that point (Bannister 84). In the day’s fighting the Confederates swept the field, but they suffered a huge casualty. Johnston was hit by a minie ball in the knee and bled to death on the battlefield. Beauregard, who assumed command, was capable, but he could not sustain the momentum of the fight. Beauregard ceased battle at nightfall. The Union forces had been pushed back over a mile from their first positions but, although hard-pressed, still

Rizvi 3

held Pittsburg Landing, which the Confederates wanted to secure in order to cut off retreat. With 20,000 reinforcements from the division at Crump’s Landing and the advance divisions of Buell’s army, the Federals took the offensive on Apr. 7. Beauregard, outnumbered and without fresh troops, resisted for about eight hours and then proceeded to withdraw to Corinth; the Union command did not make any effective pursuit (Bannister 87-90).

After all the dust had cleared, thousands of bodies lay motionless on the floor. The Battle of Shiloh had catastrophic casualty numbers. The approximate total number of casualties is 24,000 men. With 13,047 Union and 10,694 Confederate casualties, including a total of nearly 3500 killed, more than twice the number of solders fell at Shiloh than in all the previous battles of the war combined (Purcell 1780-1790).

Ultimately, Shiloh may be considered a Union victory because it led to later successful campaigns in the West. It was one of the bloodiest contests of the war. It has been the subject of more controversy than any other Civil War battle. Moreover, the Union army had turned back a major Southern attack, maintaining their position. The battle opened the way to split the Confederacy along the Mississippi, which, in the long run, meant defeat for the Confederacy. The Battle of Shiloh was a demonstration of the deadly efficiency of the new

Rizvi 4

military technology, especially the effectiveness of Civil war era artillery. The battle may have affirmed the bravery of Union and Confederate soldiers, but it ended any beliefs of immediate victory for either side. After Shiloh, Grant said, I gave up all hope of saving the Union except by complete conquest. All in all, the Battle of Shiloh was one not to be forgotten by either side, and reconstructed the idea of war in the future (Henderson 590.)

Works Cited

Henderson, Nolan. The American Civil War: A Multicultural

Encyclopedia Vol 6.. Danbury: Grolier Educational, 1986.

Purcell, Edward L. and Purcell, Sarah J. Encyclopedia of

Battles in North America. Facts on file, 1984.

Shiloh, Battle of,” Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia

2000. http://encarta.msn.com/982341.html. 1997-2000.

Shiloh, The Battle of, . The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia,

Sixth Edition. http://encyclopedia.com/articles/11861.html

Columbia University Press, 2000.