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**What sways Generals ? Personal Factors, including Age, in the Making of Military Decisions in the Wars of 1870-71 and 1914-18**

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The thesis identifies personal psychological and emotional factors in the making of crucial military decisions; As well dealing with senior military commanders, it analyses the behaviour of civilian leaders having strategic responsibilities in the two wars in question. The experience of war of 1870-71 is identified as a singular emotional factor in decisions taken in the later war; as is British the experience of the War in South Africa (1899-2002).

Conceived as an essay in military history, and specifically that of two wars which largely determined the present shape of Europe, the thesis starts by recalling the common theme of European poetry and literature in the 1920s to the effect that the great suffering of the war of 1914-18 was attributable to the conceit of an élite of 'old men'. It then sets out to provide a psychological and humanitarian explanation of how that experience became possible in the hands of nationally respected leaders

The thesis examines, successively, some of the principal personal factors affecting high-level decisions taken by commanders in the British; French, German and Russian armies, or by strategically involved civilian leaders. Under the same heading, it also identifies the effect of 'negative' (i.e. misleading) campaign experience on the making of strategic and tactical decisions.

It divides personal factors liable to affect military decision-making into two kinds - 'indigenous' factors, which may gather force as the decision-maker grows older but which are in fact intrinsic to his character, and 'induced' factors which are derived solely from external circumstances.

Among 'indigenous' factors it describes - Craving for Fame (Haig *passim*, Nivelles 1917), Moral Conviction (Haig and Christianity, Kitchener and 'Empire'); Inflexibility (French on the Aisne, Joffre and the defence of Verdun); Pessimism (Bazaine at Metz, Moltke the Younger before Paris, Ludendorff and Operation Michael).

And among 'induced' factors it cites - Isolation (Nivelles and the French military establishment, Kitchener and Gallipoli, Schlieffen and the 'Great Wheel'); Excessive caution (Pétain *passim*, the Russians *passim*); Fixation (Foch and the Artois offensives, Nivelles at the *Chemin de Dames*, Schlieffen and 'Cannae'); Personal enmity (French towards Haig), Joffre towards Gallieni, Falkenhayn towards Ludendorff); Cognitive dissonance (Rawlinson at Loos); Promotion beyond competence (Hamilton at Gallipoli, Cadorna on the Isonzo, Nivelles as a 'salesman').

The thesis also assigns an important place to what it calls 'counter-ageing factors', that is to say characteristics of thought and emotion which may enable the individual decision-maker to resist the onset of age-associated negative factors. Among counter-ageing factors, it identifies -

Flexibility (e.g. Moltke the Elder and 1870 Prussian mobilisation); Patriotism (Kitchener's

creation of Britain's 'New Armies'); Integrity of purpose (Brusilov and the 1916 Russian offensive); Humanity (Plumer's persistent concern for his soldiers), Zest for battle (Clemenceau's fight against defeatism, 1917); and Persistence (Lloyd George's efforts to control the Western Front generals).

The thesis makes extensive use of memoirs and secondary sources in a field that is already near the limit of documentation and where, in the writer's view, the need is for a fresh interpretation of known facts, rather than a fruitless quest for new ones.

Information on the psychological nature of personal factors was derived from the mass of scientific findings published in the United States, including a significant number summarized in the authoritative *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging* (6<sup>th</sup> edition) Academic Press, New York, 2006. Reference is also made and to the same publisher's *Handbook of the Biology of Aging*. For a mass of facts relating to the operational situation, and to the deliberations of leading actors, in 1914-18, the writer had recourse of the large stock of contemporary memoirs, biographies and campaign histories in the London Library and in the Liddell Hart Library at King's College, London. Newly published Russian-language texts were the source on information on Brusilov and decision-making in the Russian Stavka. The thesis also drew on the writer's personal observation of the military-decision making process as a junior officer in the war of 1939-45.

The thesis concludes that, on the evidence of performance in the wars under study -

(a) Calendar age is occasionally, but by no

means necessarily, a factor in high-level military decision making, most often in the sense that it can expose the actors to other 'negative' factors.

(b) Personal characteristics such as a tendency to pessimism or inflexibility should be treated equally with operational factors in any account of the responsibility of individuals for the suffering occasioned by the Great War.

(c) There is room for a new definition of age (which could be called 'effective age') which takes account of a commander's capacity, or otherwise, for innovation and fresh thinking in defiance of the physical progression of calendar age.

(d) In terms of innovation, some elderly actors in the wars of 1870-71 and 1914-18, notably headed by Moltke the Elder and Clemenceau, were effectively the 'youngest' decision-makers of their day.