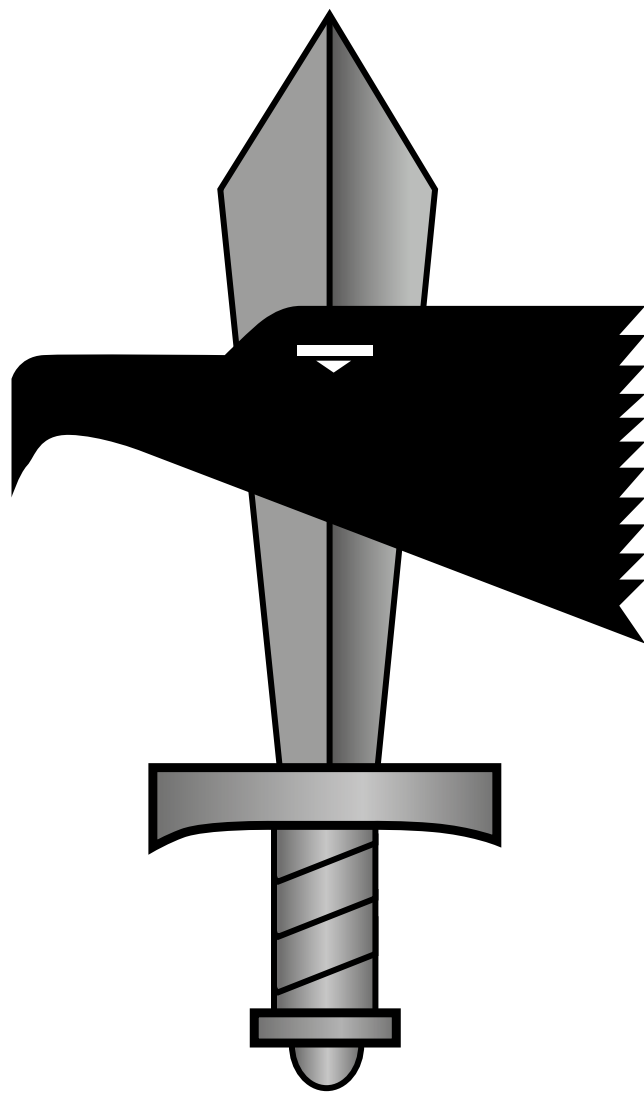


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**The Magazine of the NATO
Rapid Deployable Corps - Italy**



INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP SEMINAR 2020





NATO Rapid Deployable Corps - Italy *Ubique Celere*

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The global COVID-19 crisis is an epochal challenge that requires adjusting our work routines and the rescheduling of planned activities and events. Navigating this ongoing crisis is a tremendous endeavor, involving staff and commanders at all levels. NRDC-ITA responded and continues to respond to this challenge by both supporting the population and civil authorities while adapting internal schedules and military procedures. Our responsive support highlights the dedication of the Italian and Multinational leaders within our Corps units and HQs.

In February 2020, before the crisis of COVID-19, NRDC-Italy started a series of events and meetings focused on fostering the personal and professional development of staff and leaders. This stemmed from a seminar held in Milan that emphasized multiple forms of leadership found within the military and civilian contexts. This version of ER Magazine leverages that seminar and its' focus on leadership in its various forms with the significant contributions of invited personalities. Our contributors were from diverse organizations and came from different backgrounds and thus stimulated thought-provoking and inspiring discussions. We focused on Leadership and People, specifically, by acknowledging that fully leveraging human potential is an integral part of positive leadership and is pivotal to organizational success. With the crisis of COVID-19 the real intellectual challenge, among others, was thinking "outside of the box" to find innovative solutions such as increasing the use of web platforms and other systems that limit personal contact and ensure social distancing. The resulting changes were unprecedented, and allowed us to conceive and re-schedule a series of webinars and courses that enhanced the knowledge and understanding of our NRDC-Italy personnel, transforming "de facto" a crisis in an opportunity.

History demonstrates that during crises, like the one we are collectively experiencing, leadership significantly influences success. The complexity of modern warfare makes the role of leaders even more crucial and decisive than ever. Strong leadership is essential to overcome the fog of war because good leaders can perform even with minimum technology, while poor leaders can fail with the best technology available. Notwithstanding, whatever innovation we will experience in the future, leadership will remain essential to our success.

Leadership in various forms

Major **Stuart GIRLING**, British Army



Palazzo Cusani

When asked to think of a good leader, individual imaginations might invoke multitudes of different idealised examples. Historical figures, required to lead through difficult situations in the past; politicians, of all persuasions that have led political movements and even sporting heroes, required to lead their teams in the intensity of competition. These archetypal leadership models provide a useful foundation from which to begin a study on the subject, but often leadership takes forms and is found in places unexpected.

By bringing together a diverse array of speakers to the Palazzo Cusani in January 2020, the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps Italy (NRDC-ITA) aimed to examine 'Leadership' in various forms; military; musical; commercial and scientific, in order to better understand the complex question of "what makes a good leader?". In doing so the multinational staff at NRDC-ITA was able to learn from experts in their respective fields, deepening its understanding of specific leaders whilst also developing its appreciation into the art of leadership.

The academic study of leadership is almost as ancient as civilisation itself, with classical thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle considering questions which still concern leaders today. In *The Republic*, for example, Plato reflects on the relationship between 'strength' and 'wisdom' as virtues of leadership, whilst the delicate inter-

play of Statecraft, Military Strength and Leadership are considered by writers such as Sun Tzu and Machiavelli. Yet it is only in the last century and more concentratedly in the past few decades that the deliberate study of leadership has emerged. There can be few professions where the importance, understanding, identifying, developing, and the teaching of leadership, is more important than the military. The potential consequences for bad leaders are obvious and severe, with opportunities to learn from one's mistakes not always available.

The development of professional military leaders therefore demands that the study of this topic be taken seriously. By considering military professionals of the past, their respective personality traits, actions and indeed sometimes inactions, contemporary military leaders are able to reflect on the relative strengths and weaknesses of their different leadership styles. It was with this deliberate military focus that esteemed academics were invited to discuss the relative virtues of a cross section of military leaders.

Peter Caddick Adams is the author of numerous books on military history, a lecturer at the UK's Defence Academy and reservist military officer, all of which made him ideally placed to compare and contrast the leadership styles of two of the 20th Century's military protagonists and rivals: Field Marshals Montgomery and Rommel. Three contrasting Italian military leaders were

considered by experts on each. Amedeo Guillet, an Italian cavalry officer, indeed one of the last men ever to lead traditional cavalry in war, was considered by Sebastian O'Kelly his biographer and friend. Whilst Marshal of Italy, Luigi Cadorna's leadership during the difficult years of the first world war was considered by Marco Mondini, an assistant professor of military history at the University of Padua. Finally, the expert leadership of the last Field Marshal of Italy, Giovanni Messe during the second world war, was described by Massimo de Leonardis, a professor of History at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan and president of the International Commission of Military History. Three vastly different Italian military leaders, with three unique leadership styles for the international staff of NRDC-ITA to consider.

The international diversity within NRDC-ITA, where eighteen nations are represented on the staff is a key strength of the headquarters. Diversity within an alliance such as NATO can bring strength, so can considering diverse forms of leadership. As such, it was felt vital to represent and discuss types of leadership outside of the military tradition bringing civilian perspectives to the attention of the NRDC-ITA staff.

Situated in the magnificent grandeur of the historical Palazzo Cusani in the heart of Milan, a discussion led by Beatrice Venezi on the leadership required to conduct an orchestra, with practical examples from a superb string quartet, seemed perfectly fitting. The music produced filled the grand old ballroom marvellously and the fascinating discussion on the parallels between musical and military leadership were equally thought provoking.

Just as stimulating, and similarly quintessentially

Italian, was the insight offered by Mattia Binotto, engineer and team principal of Scuderia Ferrari in Formula One. Understanding the precise and minute details required to succeed in the most technically demanding sport in the world was certainly eye opening, as was the insights into leading a team of professionals, all of which are at the absolute pinnacle of their chosen field.

Finally, the vision and drive required to lead a project of such magnitude as sending a man to Mars was presented by Tommaso Ghidini, head of the European Space Agency's Mechanisms and Material Division. In an awe-inspiring presentation, the relative importance of "Vision" and "Initiative" in leadership were elaborated on, with space travel providing the vehicle for exciting debate from within the staff.

It is hoped that this edition of Everywhere Rapidly Magazine will provide an insight for the reader into the leadership lessons identified during NRDC-ITA's International Leadership Seminar 2020. The following articles were written by staff members of the headquarters who attended and offer personal reflections on the discussions that were had on the night, as well as the importance of leadership more generally. This hugely successful event was enjoyed by all those that were there, but as demonstrated by these articles, also engendered a greater understanding of leadership, its challenges and rewards, which can only be beneficial for the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps - Italy as well as the wider NATO Alliance.

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Palazzo Cusani - Internal room

ESA Project for Space Colonization

Major **Andrea TROVATO**, Italian Army

Space discovery and research are iconic examples of the human tendency to go above and beyond its limits, following visions. A visionary attitude is a quality that military leaders might have in adopting a holistic, effective approach to guiding the men and women under their command and as a fundamental of their own leadership.

Visions have driven people to fly, explore the immensity of the oceans, find ways to communicate across physical terrain and conquer the infinity of the space. In the latter domain especially, the visionary mindset has taken people to the moon and led to exploration far beyond that of a lifetime of possibilities. Starting from these inspirational assumptions, this article will explore how an applicable visionary attitude and innovation can be used as an engine of military leadership.

Practically all humans possess the unique ability to dream and imagine their future. Even far back in the mists of time, a sense of discovery has always characterized the attitudes of humans. In a world that is continually evolving at unprecedented speed, the lack of resources that will inevitably characterize the near future due to unrestrainable overpopulation will make it necessary to adopt new strategies to ensure the survival of humanity. And space colonization could be a response that starts to become reality.

Space discovery only started about 60 years ago, but nowadays, thanks to improvements in technology, space colonization seems no longer to be a dream or a utopia.

At present, there seems to be an enormous opportunity to return to the moon to establish a permanent human settlement, perhaps even building a lunar base. The moon is rich in mineral resources and precious metals, such as titanium and platinum, but above all there is water, in icy form, which means stable human settlements are a possibility. Elio-3, which produces a clean, non-radioactive nuclear reaction, makes generating electricity possible. Additionally, the moon offers an ideal scientific opportunity for the construction of astronomical radio telescopes that, not being filtered by the atmosphere, would allow scientists to break new barriers for space science. Finally, the moon is a perfect playground to test not only technolo-

gies, but also crews and procedures for future missions to other planets.

Returning to the more immediate future, the space sector is a research field that can have a direct impact on everyday life through, for example, new materials, nano-technologies and robotics, which are being adopted to allow humans to reach targets that, only a few years ago, were considered unattainable. Not only is space exploration extending scientific capabilities, but it can also improve life on earth by opening up new frontiers for industries like transportation. For example, flight beyond the atmosphere can be used to increase speed and consequently reduce the distance between points on earth. Alternatively, artificial/clone organs could change regenerative medicine. The space sector definitely represents the spearhead of human research and innovation and it is a real inspiration for all other sectors for innovating and having visions.

Space research is the paradigm for the development of technology and humankind and such development is based upon the visions of individuals who follow their dreams. In every field of human activity, visionary people have played the role of catalyst in changing the status quo and laying down a new benchmark for different fields, setting the scene to find new solutions or ways of doing things. Technical, social and military revolutions and progress are ignited by the vision of leaders who influence changes in mindset, ways of life and procedures of large portions of a population or communities.

Vision and initiative are tightly bound concepts in the military field. These ideas are the fundamentals for decisive actions that surprise the adversary.

The strategic vision of senior leaders makes it possible to coordinate effectively the entire effort of the military to meet the objectives set by the political level. Providing a clear path to follow and overcoming the variables of contingent



Tommaso Ghidini

operations, a strategic vision will focus on effectively contrasting an adversary's capabilities and optimally exploiting available capacities. By setting and having clear strategic goals (vision), leaders can effectively assess the situation, ensure the responsiveness of the entire system and concentrate capabilities to contrast adversary actions where and when necessary.

Military leaders seeking to maintain the clarity of strategic goals and their own vision for how to conduct operations must share their objectives with subordinate commanders to allow them some degree of initiative, as this eases the weight of operational execution on the higher echelons.

Doctrinally, in western military thinking, this granting of room for initiative by leaders is done using the concept of mission command¹, where at all levels, the initiative of commanders is encouraged in order to act independently under the umbrella of general guidance from higher echelons.

By enabling military leaders to maintain their own vision and granting subordinates freedom of execution, mission command makes it possible to apply innovative approaches to conducting a military campaign and operations. Like in the field of science, where the vision leads to innovation, in the military art, the freedom to

maintain a vision and initiative leads to revolutionary methods or equipment to be used in operations. The link between innovation and military art is tangible in the "Revolution of Military Affairs" concept, where technology is linked to large-scale use in the military domain, leading to new ways of conducting operations. The introduction of firearms into a battlefield, the extensive use of railways in moving troops and equipment or, more recently, adopting information and cyber tools in conducting battles to influence the adversary's will to fight are iconic examples of the application of contingent technology in the military realm.

Technological innovation contributed to the "transformation of the chameleon"² becoming an important aspect of the military art, but innovation and applied technology rely on the vision of the military leaders who want to introduce them into the military domain in order to surprise the adversary and keep the initiative. Military history has outstanding examples of innovative tactics and equipment that surprise the adversary and lead to unexpected results.

Napoleon did not apply the technology but the ideas of the French Revolution to the military domain and he surprised his adversaries. Making the entire population part of the army ("La levee en masse") and the formation of indepen-

¹ AJP 3.2 Land Operations NATO embraces Mission Command (for full details see ATP-3.2.2). This command philosophy is based on the principle of centralized planning and decentralized execution that promotes maximum freedom of action and initiative. It grants subordinate commanders freedom in the way they execute their missions. The degree of freedom of action will depend on mission types. When control measures are imposed (necessary for conducting specific tasks), they should not restrict freedom of thought in how to approach them. Mission command philosophy is a key aspect of the manoeuvrist approach. It allows subordinate commanders the flexibility and authority to exploit vulnerability in enemy strengths as they are discovered.

² Angelo Michele Ristuccia in "La guerre pour ceux que la font" – Benoit Durieux.

dent armies (the “Corps”) are direct emanations of philosophical ideas from the Revolution. In the first case, involving the entire nation’s resources in a military effort was unprecedented in fighting wars before Napoleon as armies were organized directly drawing on the finances of the King and nobles, and setting up armies was only justified for contingent wars. The second example – the idea of the Corps – is more innovative in the realm of military tactics, where relative smaller independent military units were organized and moved in accordance with the strategic directions given by the military leader, concentrating the fighting power where needed and making the military more flexible and responsive. Napoleon is an example of visionary ideas used to innovate the army.

Coming to more recent examples, the use of railways in armed forces logistics in World War I made it possible to move unimaginable quantities of manpower and equipment to the frontline in a matter of hours, concentrating power when and where it was needed for a manoeuvre³. WWI was also the stage for using large-scale industrial production to support the military effort, with industry and technology completely focused on aiding military operations. This was the first time in human history this had happened and it created a major break between before and after in how military operations were conducted.

The large-scale use of technological innovation in WWI made it clear to leaders that they had to exploit contemporary science to defeat the enemy, thus changing the way operations were conducted. A clear example of this concept is the creation of the armoured forces as the spearhead of the armies in the German Army prior to WWII, applying the Guderian idea of exploiting tanks as the main weapon, not in support of the infantry but vice versa. The vision of having a manoeuvre led by armoured vehicles was supported by innovation in engineering new tanks that were more mobile and had greater firepower.

More recently, the revolutionary use of airpower, as projected artillery, in the Six-Day War provides another case study for innovation. In this example, the innovative vision of the Israeli leaders was to use airpower not only as close support for the land manoeuvre but also as a firepower multiplier, extending fire capacity beyond artillery range and hitting the adversary deep in its own area. During WWII, airpower was employed to hit strategic objectives or to support troops in close combat. By contrast, the Israeli military applied an innovative vision to use airpower as the arm of the operational level, surprising the adversary and shaping the battlefield tactically, making its operations possible by drastically reducing the enemy’s fighting

power. In this case, the vision was the enhanced operational integration of different components, overcoming the constraints of the terrain.

Conclusion

To conclude, vision might be a characteristic of military leaders who want to maintain the initiative in using the military to pursue objectives set by the political side. Vision is the thrust to innovation and technological revolutions provide a strategic advantage over adversaries. However, leaders must always know the limits of innovation and use it within the constraints of reality, making sure it is used correctly. For example, it is necessary to receive correct feedback from the industrial sector that manages and produces the innovative products in time; in terms of the second limitation, it is important to connect the leader’s vision with the correct use of the innovative technology. On this front, history provides hard lessons. In WWII, jets (ME 262) were misused by the Germans as bombers and not to re-gain air superiority, nullifying the revolutionary results this could have had in the war. Innovation might not become the strategy itself but must be the tool to pursue strategic objectives. For example, the Israelis discovered in the Yom Kippur War and the USA in the Vietnam War that superior technology can be overcome either by new innovations (SAM air defences used by Egyptians in 1973) or new tactics and strategies (asymmetric/hybrid warfare conducted by the Vietcong).

Like in space research, where the vision leads the way for researchers to go beyond current limits, in the military domain, bearing in mind the limitations of correctly applying technologies, leaders must distinguish themselves by maintaining the vision as the guide for their actions so as to inspire and effectively lead the people they are responsible for.

About the Author

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3 Michelle Toscano – (March 29, 2011 Military History Vardi) The Advent of Railroads in Military Affairs.

So different, so equal. Leadership in comparison: Rommel a bold 'modernist painter', Montgomery a 'painstaking seventeenth- century minimalist'.

Major **Giorgio CULASSO**, Italian Army

Erwin Rommel and Bernard Law Montgomery were two leaders with very different leadership styles, representing two countries (or Empires, at that time) that were at war twice in the twentieth century. Both General Field Marshalls (or *Generalfeldmarschall*) were analysed at length by historians in the second half of last century. Their leadership styles, their arts of command were at odds, but both of them, at various stages, were probably the right men in the right place for their chain of command and the decision-makers in their countries. Their leaderships, though diverse, let them win the *hearts and minds* of their subordinates, while generating envy among their colleagues and, sometimes, their superiors. In order to realize why this happened, one has to better understand what lessons and take-aways both of them gained from experiences throughout their careers (or, in the case of Erwin Rommel, entire life since he did not survive World War II).

The early ages

Both officers were born and grew up far away from the centre of the Empire.

Bernard Law Montgomery was born in 1877 in London, but grew up in Northern Ireland and, later, in Tasmania, the whole family following the father, an Anglican bishop. Although his family had no links to the English or Army establishment, a twenty-one-year old Montgomery entered Sandhurst Royal Military College in 1908. Although he was almost expelled for rowdiness and violence, he managed to graduate in September of that year, after which he was commissioned into the First Warwickshire as 2nd Lieutenant, posted in India at that time.

Erwin Johannes Eugen Rommel was born in Heidelberg, Swabia, in 1891. He was the third son of a mathematics professor. In 1910, his father pushed him to enlist in the 124th Infantry Regiment as a cadet officer. After two years, upon

his commission as Lieutenant, he was sent back to the same regiment until March 1914, when he was temporarily posted as Battery Commander to the 46th Field Artillery Regiment, XII Royal Wurttemberg Corps. When war broke out he returned to his previous unit. Temporarily placing young infantry officers into artillery regiments was quite common in Germany at that time as it greatly increased infantry-artillery cooperation, with some good examples in World War I.

Under fire

Both Rommel and Montgomery took part in World War I. Montgomery departed from mainland Britain at the beginning of the war, joining the BEF¹, while Rommel was with his Regiment. Both spent time convalescing during the first year of war, after being wounded in action. For those episodes, Montgomery would receive a DSO² and Rommel both Second and later First-

1 British Expeditionary Force.

2 Distinguished Service Order.

Class Iron Crosses.

Montgomery spent the entire four years on the Western Front (mostly in the Somme area), firstly as Platoon Commander and then, after recovering, in several staff officer duties from Brigade to Corps level, ending the war as GSO1³ (currently Chief of Staff) of the 47th Division. Fully committed to his role, Montgomery placed great stock in careful planning, learning how to best use their scant resources. His high water-mark during the conflict was in 1915, when he was posted as Brigade Major (Chief of Staff) of the new-born 104th Infantry Brigade. Despite this being his first staff assignment, he was able to overshadow his Brigadier and act as the Commanding Officer, by controlling the entire supply and training of the unit.

Conversely, in 1916 Rommel joined the newly created Royal Württemberg Mountain Battalion of the *Alpenkorps*. His Battalion Commander, Theodor Sprösser, had great faith in Rommel's abilities. During 1917 he fought in Romania (Mount Cosna) and then took part in the Battle of Caporetto. In this fight he displayed an instinctive feeling for handling mobile formations and for hasty attacking, even when the force ratio was not in his favour. In the Caporetto battle he was able to seize Longarone (about 100 km behind the front line) with two rifle companies and capture almost the entire Italian division stationed there. For that act of valour, he received the *Pour le Merite*, the highest German wartime decoration. After that, he was assigned to a staff position for the first time in the 64th Army Corps, where he served for the remainder of the war.

After the first world war

Both the Officers started the war as Lieutenants and ended it as Captains, even though Montgomery sometimes had other temporary ranks (up to Lieutenant Colonel), and they emerged from the conflict with glowing reputations. In the decades between World Wars I and II, they held various command positions at several levels, were staff officers and attended their respective staff colleges. In this period, they increased their leadership skills and their self-esteem. Both became scholars of infantry tactics. After his tour as Headquarters Company Commander in 1929, Montgomery was assigned to the War Office, making a major contribution to the updated Infantry Training Manual; while Rommel, in 1937, wrote the influential manual "Infantry Attacks", a volume much admired by Hitler.

Both also became Staff College (Montgomery, in Quetta) or Cadet School (Rommel, in Potsdam) tutors. Thanks to their combat skill and their personal charisma, the two leaders were able to

capture the attention of young officers, helping to train new classes of leaders in their countries, with some of these later serving with them in World War II.

By September 1939, Montgomery was Major General, 3rd Armoured Division Commanding Officer, while Rommel, as *Generalmajor*, acted as *Furherbegleitbrigade* (Hitler and his Command Post Escort Brigade) commander.

Career peak

In 1940, both Rommel and Montgomery found themselves again in France. Montgomery's 3rd Division was deployed as part of the BEF in France first and later in Belgium in an attempt to delay the German invasion. In the time the unit spent waiting for action, Montgomery conducted harsh training in mobile defence. During the withdrawal to Dunkirk, Montgomery's training paid off and the 3rd Division showed great professionalism, covering the retreat of British forces and sailing to Britain almost intact at the end of Operation Dynamo.⁴ At the height of that retreat, Montgomery temporarily assumed command of II Corps, the 3rd Division parent unit.

In the meantime, Rommel was celebrated as the Commander of the "Ghost Division". In France, his 7th Panzer Division was able to reach Cherbourg by conducting a series of raids in northern France. His Division was almost never spotted by enemies, sometimes even losing contact with his superiors. This high-tempo action that was so thoroughly exploited by Third Reich propaganda aimed to use fast, resolute attacks to achieve results deep inside enemy territory. Although the 7th Division had the highest casualty rate among German Divisions, it was able to capture more than 100,000 prisoners and practically destroy two armoured Divisions.

During the following year, Montgomery was appointed as Commander of V and XII Corps, both responsible for the defence of British territory, while Rommel reached Libya as DAK⁵ Commander.

In 1942, after Germany took much of North Africa, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill appointed Montgomery as Eighth Army General Commanding Officer. From here on, Montgomery and Rommel engaged in an almost two-year long battle in the Sahara Desert. Montgomery inherited a struggling army about 60 miles west of Alexandria, with very low morale following a long withdrawal from Libya to Egypt. His first action was to state no further retreat was allowed and that they would change things around. Montgomery was always careful to avoid battles unless the odds were stacked in his favour, and he would call off breakthrough

³ General Staff Officer 1.

⁴ During Operation Dynamo, the British were able to withdraw the majority of the BEF from France.

⁵ Deutsches Afrika Korps.



Peter Caddick Adams

expeditions if they might overstretch both the front and supply lines.

Conversely, Rommel preferred hasty planning and subsequent action, even without full supplies. As he had done during the French campaign, his main concern was pace, by taking any possible advantage in real-time and being able to exploit it, even if it meant a unit advancing beyond a reasonable distance from its supplies. On the logistics side, these aggressive actions overextended Axis lines of communication, resulting in continual supply problems for his army. After the war, it was calculated that about one third of the total amount of fuel required in war was necessary for transportation. During the African campaign, Rommel failed to recognize this basic need of logistics planning, resulting in the Italian army often being blamed (as it was responsible for overall sustainment and transportation in the battle area).

After the North African clashes, they met each other again for the last time in 1944, in Normandy: Rommel was the Commander of German defences in the area, while Montgomery was the Commander of all allied land units. After an attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler in July, GESTAPO⁶ and SD⁷ identified Rommel as a partner of the plotters and, on 14 October, encouraged by those organizations, he committed suicide.

After World War II, Montgomery became Chief of the Imperial General Staff and, later, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. He died in 1976.

Comparing Leadership

Rommel undoubtedly had extraordinary charisma. He often demonstrated courage, leading his troops from the front, no matter the size of the unit. His bravery and thoughtlessness drove him close to death several times, during World War I, the French invasion in 1940, and in North Africa. In July 1944, for example, he probably reached the border between life and death after an air attack on his duty car while coming back from a visit to the front. The surgeon that saw him was amazed that he had survived the quadruple skull fracture he had suffered.

He never asked his men to do something he was not willing to do, believing it was very important to be seen by his troops, rushing everywhere along the front over the battlefield. He personally commanded tactical detachments when he thought it was necessary, showing his subordinates he was always on the edge line. Being able to pull men to their extremes is a great strength for a leader, but sometimes he showed he was not aware of his limits, with perhaps the best example the events in North Africa in 1942. He placed enormous strain on the entire DAK, and even more on himself, in order to reach the Nile before the British received supplies from the mainland and from the Americans. This race against time during that summer resulted in such physical exhaustion he could not command at all times. When Montgomery eked his breakthrough during the second El-Alamein battle Rommel returned from Germany, but at that time the situation had worsened to an extent

6 Geheime Staatspolizei, German (Nazi) Secret State Police.

7 Sicherheitsdienst, Security Service of the Reichsführer-SS.



Rommel reviews the troops

that it was impossible for him to counter the fate of the Axis in North Africa.

His leadership was the true embodiment of *Mission Oriented (or Auftragstaktik)* concept, in which the Commander gives short orders, making very clear and straightforward his intent to his subordinate commanders. Then, it was their task to find the way to accomplish the mission, acting accordingly and in the manner they deemed best. This procedure, which was quite common in an army in which leaders were trained to take decisions up to two levels-up, was emphasized by Rommel. He had great confidence in his own intuition - his ability to sense both friendly and enemy vulnerabilities at a glance, making reconnaissance his best suit. During battle, he usually guided his units directly from the front, using a very light tactical command post with a few trusted attendants and leaving his Chief of Staff in the rear, together with almost the entire staff, to manage the required duties and communication with the higher echelons. With this light command post, he was able to keep real-time situational awareness of the battlefield, but with limited interaction with his staff, resulting in a narrow overview of the operational picture of the battle and minimal exchange of views with the rest of his headquarters and his subordinate commanders, who were placed far from him, and the upper echelons.

For this reason, he is commonly – and rightly

– perceived as a soloist. He frequently became very frustrated on receiving any kind of limitation from above, up to disobeying if he believed orders did not match his beliefs. During the North Africa campaign, for instance, although he formally depended on the Italians, he often bypassed them, receiving – or asking for - orders directly from *Feldmarschall* Kesselring, the German Commander for the area, and sometimes even from the *Führer*. As an example, he was unaware that the cracking of Enigma machine encryption⁸ was exploited by Allies, letting them know Axis moves in advance. Indeed, he was quick to condemn the Italians, being absolutely sure the Italian spies were responsible for information leaks to the British. As such, he preferred to talk directly with his mainland commanders (using Enigma encrypted messages) to prevent additional information losses, never considering this could have been counterproductive.

His stubbornness resulted in him arguing with his German seniors, even with the *Führer* himself, especially when his pleas for reinforcements fell on deaf ears, due to the concurrent German attack on Russia, which was more important for the top ranks of the German army.

On the other hand, Montgomery was deeply criticized post-World War II for being overcautious and refusing to enter into a battle unless there was clear superiority over the enemy. For him, the North Africa campaign looked like a watershed, from which he became a master of

⁸ The Enigma machine was an encryption device widely used by Germany during World War II. This encryption method was broken by the British early in the war, allowing them to develop the Ultra programme in order to decrypt German messages.

war, especially for manpower and supplies. As Winston Churchill stated: "... What is a general for? Answer: to win battles. Did he win them without much slaughter? Yes. So what are you grumbling about?"

As a master of organization, he put tremendous pressure for planning on his staff. He wanted to be sure his subordinate commanders were fully aware of the tactics he had decided to use during the fight. As such, he tended to personally brief his subordinates in detail about his plans and he sought to have a continuous grip on what was happening during the fight so he could supervise any possible outcomes and avoid any loosening of the steering role. For the same reason, he often sent trusted staff officers, acting as his liaison officers, to secondary and dependent commands, and whenever possible he carefully selected subordinate commanders who would execute his plans without question. As soon as he took command of the VIII Army in Egypt, he stopped the former Battle-Group system, in which Divisions were split and remerged in order to accomplish determined tasks. He favoured unity of command, strongly believing a unit must always fight together with all its components. With this order of battle, men will fight with their fellow soldiers – the people they trained with – and this will produce maximum effort and build team cohesion.

He spent a lot of time meeting subordinate units to raise overall morale. To the same end, he also stressed some focal points, such as personal equipment, medical care, comfort (within means and capabilities), any possible leisure – with a maniacal attention even to the smallest details, such as the mail system – and rest for the troops. On this side, he always stated he preferred a good sleep at night to be more productive the next day, instead of working without a break, even in the worst conditions.

Frequent meetings with his troops – not usual at that time, especially in the British Army – made him well known to them. However, what his subordinates really appreciated about him was his frankness and the fact that he never asked them to do something he was not able to do himself.

While the people below him liked him, Montgomery was not always able to gain such esteem among his equals, superiors, and allies, mostly because of his obduracy. He had an especially tense relationship with the Americans, mainly because he saw them as "too green" (inexperienced) to fight against the Germans. Consequently, he often expressed his discontent at being under the command of Gen. Eisenhower during Operation Overlord⁹ and the following European campaign.

Rommel and Montgomery might have followed quite similar paths in childhood and their ca-

reers, but they adopted two different leadership styles. Both of them were fond of personal training and never asked their men to achieve something they believed impossible to gain by themselves; however, at least for Rommel, he was not always able to understand his limits. Their insistence on high standards resulted in more than one dependent officer – and even commanding ones – being fired because they were not deemed capable enough.

Being good communicators, both saw publicity as very important, and tried to make themselves the centre of it. This often meant being impatient with their seniors and Allies, but at the same time it allowed them to win the ears of their respective political leaders.

Rommel was the archetype of a *Mission Command* leader, highlighting only the most important parts of his plan – frequently a *hasty* plan – in order to force the tempo as much as possible and exploit any immediate gains, regardless of other operational dilemmas, such as support issues.

On the other side, Montgomery was widely recognized as a perfectionist and focused on detailed planning, sometimes losing momentum to checkmate the adversary because of missing information. Montgomery also resorted to a large staff, especially during planning, acting as a conductor, whereas Rommel often took decisions alone, due to the very short time for operations conducted close to the front. Comparing their leadership styles, it is quite easy to state that Erwin Rommel was probably one of the best tactical commanders ever seen in action, but very poor at both operational and strategic planning, while Montgomery rose in the Olympus of Commanders by waiting for the right moment – at least the one he saw as best, taking into consideration force ratios and supplies – to launch the decisive attack, but only in case of known superiority. While his leadership approach had some tactical shortcomings, it did allow him to become a meritorious operative and strategic leader.

For the above-mentioned reasons, Dr. Peter Cad-dick Adams in his "Monty and Rommel: Parallel Lives", referred to the two Generals as a bold modernist painter (Rommel) and a painstaking seventeenth-century minimalist (Montgomery). This comparison with painters is because he recognizes Rommel as an instinct-driven leader, sometimes even overcoming – or ignoring – given orders ("...applying big, bold splashes of un-remitting primary colours by instinct onto large canvases, whether or not he had been commissioned to paint large), while Montgomery, due to his well-known planning accuracy, is seen as "... a careful craftsman – more of the seventeenth-century miniaturist, with meticulous attention to detail." In his comparison of them,

9 Huge landing operation led by Allies on 6 June 1944 on the shores of Normandy.

Caddick Adams later stated he saw Rommel as a loner, a brilliant painter, while Montgomery would be the leader of a studio full of apprentices.

Conclusion

Nowadays, at least for western armies, Rommel's leadership style as a high-level officer could create quite a tangle because of the rules of engagement and standard behaviour are very different to the first half of last century. Furthermore, a leader that tended to override or ignore orders from higher echelons would create huge problems in conduct, both in the military and the civilian precincts. At the same time, this kind of leadership could be a force multiplier at lower levels, especially in Peace Support/Enforcement Operations, even if it relies heavily on mutual trust among commanders and on a thorough knowledge of above commander's intent. Historians broadly agree an army could probably only handle one Rommel without a real risk of collapsing.

Nevertheless, solely applying Montgomery-style leadership at this time could create a sort of operational lockdown. In the above-mentioned operations, in a contemporary Alliance pivot, units are normally deployed with short supplies overseas and with a long, and sometimes flimsy, chain of supply from the motherland. Furthermore, Montgomery's focus on planning might cause a modern commander, especially in military operations other than war, to lose the right momentum to act. In the end, failure to use such momentum could negatively affect the ability to reach decisive points or even the adversary's centre of gravity, which is often non-material and related to the *hearts and minds* of the local population.

Both leaders relied on a dispersed Command Post, with a Main Command Post in the rear area and a Forward Command Post (for Montgomery) or a Tactical Command Post, (smaller than the former, with minimal resources, but even closer to the edge of the battle) used by Rommel. Such shrewdness meant that, during battles, they were among their soldiers and could observe progress. In the present, it is quite normal to decentralize the command post and increase both safety measures and redundancy, especially because of the possibilities offered by the latest communication systems.

As shown by Rommel and Montgomery, a good leader must be able to manage public information. This is even more important today because of the large-scale presence of various mass medias in any theatre of operations.

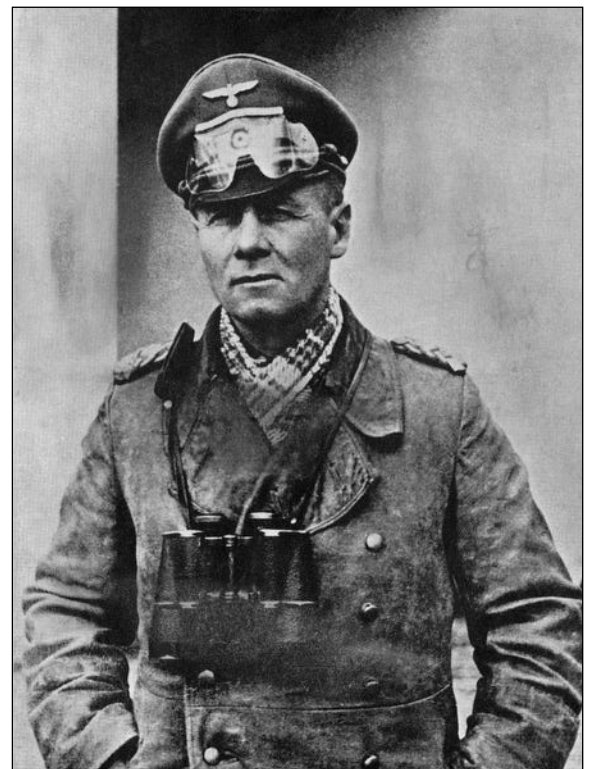
The best kind of leadership is probably a good balance between these two fundamentally different examples from World War I and II. While it is probably impossible to find one person who

has the perfect balance of these two conflicting ways of leading men, it would be great to have a good mixture of them among commanders at various levels, particularly if they are not overly stubborn.

About the Author

Major Giorgio CULASSO joined the 185th Army Academy Course in 2003. After being promoted 1st Lieutenant in 2008, he was assigned to 1st Mountain Artillery Regiment in Fossano, where he was nominated Deputy Battery Commander and then Battery Commander. After attending the 143rd Staff College Course in 2017-18, he was assigned to HQ NRDC-ITA as J7 Exercise Planner SO.

During his serving in 1st Mountain Arty Regt he was deployed twice in Afghanistan (ISAF XIII and ISAF XIX) and spent more than two years and a half as a Unit Commander in various Italian cities in the framework of Homeland security Operations. He is married and has one son.



Erwin Rommel

Leadership, the ability to not be predictable, understand changes and find solutions aimed at achieving the assigned target

Col. Michele MASTRONARDI, Italian Army

Mattia Binotto, an engineer, was born on 3 November 1969 in Lausanne, Switzerland. Having graduated in Mechanical Engineering from Lausanne Polytechnic in 1994, he obtained a Master's in Motor Vehicle Engineering in Modena. In 1995, he joined the "Scuderia Ferrari" test team as a Test Engine.



#essere *ferrari*

#being Ferrari

Engineer, holding this role in the race team from 1997 to 2003. In 2004, he became a race engine engineer and from 2007, he took on the role of Chief Engineer, Race and Assembly, moving on in 2009 to Head of Engine and KERS Operations.

Having been appointed Deputy Director, Engine and Electronics in October 2013, Binotto subsequently took on the role of Chief Operating Officer, Power Unit. On 27 July 2016, he was appointed as Chief Technical Officer of Scuderia Ferrari.

The Ferrari World

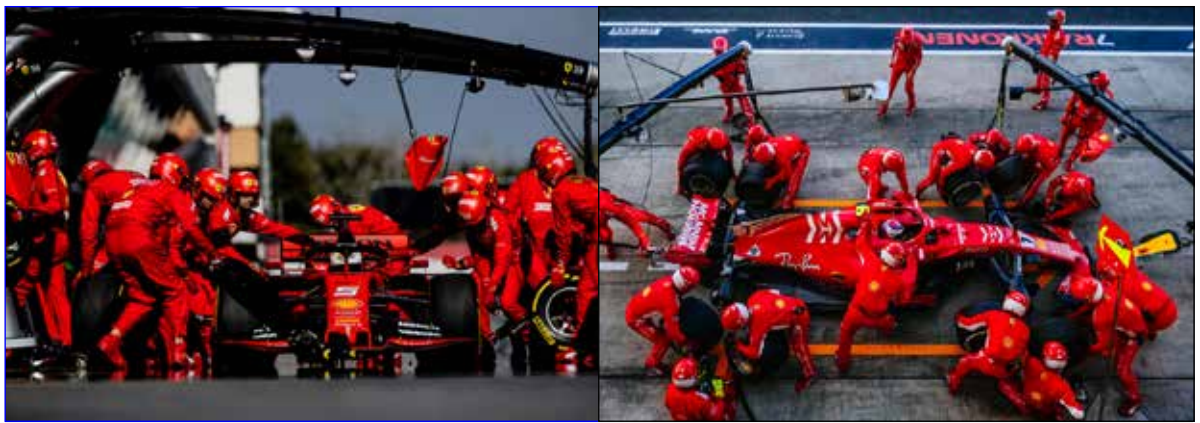
The Ferrari Universe is a combination of lifestyle and passion. Enzo Ferrari was motivated by **desire** and a **strong vision** (picture 1). He wrote many of the unforgettable chapters of motorsport history, with victories in major racing categories, leading the most successful racing team in the world. Racing was "Core" to the Ferrari philosophy. He once stated that "*races have been an invaluable source of innovation and improvement, resulting in an intellectual relationship between the human being and races.*"

Matteo Binotto did not focus entirely on leadership and entertained the audience about Ferrari, its factory organization, management and vision. He said that the racing team, the most visible part, seen on TV during Grand Prix races, is a part of the team with about 100 people. This team travels around the world following



Picture 1 - Enzo Ferrari Statement

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Picture 2 - Ferrari Reach back implementation

the calendar of the F1 World Championship. However, the backbone of the organization is the factory back home in Maranello (“reach back”), that is, the non-visible part of the team, where 1500 employees work daily, on the Research, Design and Development (RD&D) of F1 cars. Ferrari is a strong team with solid foundations (picture 2).

Two domains have to be managed. The first is the technical car domain, focusing on aerodynamics, engine and chassis. F1 cars are sophisticated machines, which differ from team to team and incorporate different technical solutions. All F1 cars, can potentially cover a lap on a race-track in about 1 minute 30 seconds. The car in pole is 0.1 second faster. The second domain is personnel, which managers have to focus on. In the Ferrari F1 team, people know exactly what their job entails and so push in the same direction.

In F1 there are very wealthy owners and teams, with access to significant resources. They are very competitive and efficient. The right mentality and values are key to achieving ambitious results. Ferrari firmly believes in this.

The factory’s main goal is not “win at all costs.” Working at Ferrari is about living “emotion”. The motto is to keep the feeling that Enzo Ferrari is alive. In fact, Ferrari’s Hash Tag in “Being Ferrari”.

The factory’s strategy is of paramount importance to Ferrari. “Predict and not just react” is the factory motto. The future is uncertain and unexpected changes can occur at any time. For example, the new F1 regulations for 2020/21 introduce major changes to the cars. Unity of effort and pushing in the same direction are how Ferrari finds solutions to challenges.

Mr. Marchionne said that *“each success story is based on the ability of a group of men and women to make a cultural change – even before a technical one. There are no figures that can explain this kind of change, because it occurs at a much deeper level than a single project. Corporate culture is not just a part of the game. It’s the essence of the game itself...”*

A F1 team is like an iceberg, most of it is sub-

merged, unseen (picture 3). Managers have to focus on this part of the whole team. Emotion, relations and willpower are key factors for the stability of the iceberg. Ignoring these simple factors would mean the iceberg loses stability and direction.

Managers are in charge of making decisions in their areas of responsibility, such as, financial boundaries or decisions about aerodynamics, engine and chassis for 2021. Therefore, strategic planning is paramount to Ferrari.

Marchionne was a baseball player in the USA.



Picture 3 - The iceberg concept

He once stated that *“it is difficult to hit a ball and send it as far as you can, in the right direction.”* He was aware of sending a team in one precise direction (picture 4).

In the past, when Ferrari had to design a new F1 car, due to the introduction of new regulations, engineers first set an objective. The objective was *“to Design and Develop (D&D) a new F1 car that is 3 seconds faster than the previous year.”* They suggested to Marchionne that a 3.5 seconds improvement would be a better target, but in response he set the enhanced target of 8 seconds. The new objective was really ambitious for the engineers. Ideas were put on the table and everybody pushed hard to achieve the new objective. That F1 car was eventually, 4.5 seconds faster than the reference model and 1.5 seconds beyond the engineer’s



Picture 4 - Guiding team in the right direction

initial estimation. The lesson learned was that a demanding objective can be achieved by the right motivation. Marchionne once told managers, *“Do not be predictable! Do not follow predictable lines, because a competitor will arrive at the same goal using the same lines and arrive before you.”*

Continuous improvement, in all domains, is another key principle at Ferrari. A clear vision, high values, competence, clear objectives, prediction and continuous improvement are essential to manage 1,500 expert personnel.

Returning to the Ferrari hash tag **“being Ferrari”**. This implies competence, innovation, communication, building, growing, sharing, enjoying, feeling emotion, cooperating, helping, involving, fighting, celebrating,... **WINNING TOGETHER!**

Conclusion

Completing successfully in F1 requires achieving key principles in the pyramid, in which humans are an essential part. Away from budgets, men and women have a decisive role in responding to changes, reading the atmosphere and also predicting. Corporate spirit and valuable leadership are essential to be a winning team. Believing in these principles, Enzo Ferrari fought as David against Goliath. He demonstrated, with a limited budget and a small team of technicians, that it was possible to be a motorsport winner in major world racing categories.

About the Author

Col. Michele MASTRONARDI, ACOS J6, has a technical background and used to be an active motorsports follower. He is also a racetrack motorbike rider.



NRDC-ITA
Public Affairs Office

Mattia Binotto

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Amedeo GUILLET. A dashing Cavalry Officer, guerrilla leader in Italian East Africa and loyal diplomat of the First Republic after the war.

Lt. Col. **Andrea MARI**, Italian Army

A very real, concrete example of the difference a resilient leader can make comes from our history in East Africa and is still valid nowadays. AMEDEO GUILLET was a true example of a resilient leader. Good relationships among comrades, and with superiors, are important in determining the perception of oneself and one's abilities during a mission.

Sebastian O'Kelly is an Irish journalist. In 1995 he first learnt about Amedeo Guillet in an interview with Indro Montanelli, a famous Italian journalist who had served in the Abyssinian war. O'Kelly became a close friend of Guillet and repeatedly spent time with him in Ireland. In 2000 he followed Guillet to Eritrea, to the places where Amedeo had operated with his Amhara Group. During this visit he was received in Asmara by the President of the Republic of Eritrea with the honours reserved for Heads of State.

First experiences as a Horseman

Sebastian O'Kelly presented Guillet starting with his imprisonment in Hodeida, Yemen in December 1941. During this period of psychological stress, Amedeo Guillet managed to survive by recalling his past. He was born on 7 February 1909 to a noble family from Piedmont and Capua. He attended the Military Academy of Modena until 1931, earning the rank of First Lieutenant in the Royal Army Cavalry. Assigned to the "Cavaleggeri di Monferrato" regiment, he showed his military qualities especially as a horse-rider. He was one of the first Officers of the Italian Cavalry who adopted Captain Federico Caprilli's natural riding style. His innate equestrian abilities led to his inclusion among the four cavalymen that would have constituted the Italian riding team for the Berlin Olympics in 1936. However, he never went to the Berlin Olympics because the Abyssinia campaign started and Lieutenant Guillet's priority was to serve his country and the war campaign. In truth, this was his first decision that would end up giving a clear direction to his life. During his time in captivity, his mind went back to his lovers. He thought about his cousin Beatrice Gandolfo,

who was from a Capuan noble family. They only married only in September 1944 because, during World War II, Mussolini passed a marriage law stating that only married army officers were eligible for promotion. Although Guillet loved Beatrice intensely, he felt it was humiliating and incorrect to get married for promotion. So, he decided to win his promotion on war merit. The second woman was Kadija, the daughter of a very important chieftain who he met in Abyssinia. She fell in love with Amedeo and decided to support him throughout the fighting in Eritrea.



Guillet during his career as competitive rider

Colonial Africa and Spain

Assigned to the Royal Corps of Colonial Troopers, he served in Libya in the Spahis unit and in October 1935 he commanded a platoon during the first part of the war in Ethiopia. On 24 December of the same year his left hand was seriously wounded during the *Battle of Selaclà*. When hostilities ended, on 5 May 1936, he received an award for bravery from Marshal of Italy Italo Balbo in Tripoli. In March 1937 Amedeo was placed in charge of organizing an equestrian ceremony in Tripoli in which Benito Mussolini proclaimed himself the “Defender of Islam” to drum up support from Islamic people against British dominance in Africa. In August 1937, he accepted General Frusci’s proposal to follow him to the Spanish civil war, where he distinguished himself in the *battles of Santander and Teruel*; there he commanded a tank unit of the division “Fiamme Nere” (*Black Flames*) and headed a Moroccan cavalry tabor. After a short period of convalescence in Italy, he went to Libya as 7th Savari Squadron Commander.

Eritrea, the devil commander legend

Shortly before Italy entered World War II, Guillet was sent to Eritrea and appointed Commander of “Gruppo Bande Amhara”, a multi-ethnic military unit, with 1700 Ethiopian, Eritrean and Yemeni men. Guillet’s Group had to operate, with autonomy and freedom of action, against the enemy in the north-west of Eritrea.

In 1939, during a battle against the guerrillas in the Dougur Dubà region, Amedeo forced the enemy to a fight in an open field. During one of the attacks his horse was hit and killed. Guillet immediately wanted another horse; when the second horse was also hit, he took command of a machine gun and shot at the last rebels on the battlefield. For this, a “*worthy example of heroism and contempt of danger*”, he was awarded the Silver Medal of Military Valour. He was nicknamed the “*Devil Commander*” by his native soldiers because they were convinced he was immortal.



Amedeo Guillet with full dress uniform

Cheru charge

On the night of 20 January 1941, Guillet returned to the Cheru fort after a long and exhausting patrol but he had to leave again to face the English Gazelle Force that threatened to encircle thousands of Italian soldiers retreating towards Agordat. At the dawn of 21 January, Guillet’s Group, armed with swords, guns and grenades, attacked the enemy from behind by creating confusion among the Anglo-Indian ranks. After having passed unharmed among the enemy troops, the Group returned to their initial positions to attack again. That was the last cavalry assault in the military history of Africa.

Guillet also headed his Group in the *battles of Cochen and Teclesan* but they were defeated in Asmara on 1 April 1941.



Italo Balbo presenting the Bronze Medal to Amedeo Guillet



Guillet with a Gruppo Bande Amhara member

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Private war

After the defeat in Asmara, Guillet realized the only way to help the Italian troops on the North African front was to keep the English soldiers in Eritrea engaged. On 3 April 1941, Guillet decided to continue the war against the English in East Africa. He gathered about a hundred of his native soldiers and started a violent guerrilla battle against the English troops. His legend grew and English intelligence started a “*manhunt*”. A reward of more than a thousand pounds of gold was offered, but Guillet was never betrayed, not even by the tribal leaders who had previously fought the Italians and had offered him refuge. During the guerrilla battle, for almost eight months he assaulted and plundered English deposits and trains, and he blew up their bridges and tunnels making communication routes unsafe. However, at the end of October 1941, his soldiers were reduced and so the aim of his mission was no longer attainable. In particular, the capture of his grey horse “*Sandor*” by Major Max Harari of English intelligence, who was responsible for searching for Guillet, made him realize that he could not continue the war. So he gathered together his Group and thanked them, promising them that Italy would have rewarded them and went away.

Guillet settled in the outskirts of Massaua where he assumed the fake identity of Ahmed Abdallah al-Redai, a Yemenite worker. He turned into an authentic Arab in order to escape to Yemen. After reaching Yemen, he became a groom in the guard of the Imam Yahiah, the Yemenite

King. The Imam gave Guillet the rank of “*Great Farrier of Court*” and he appointed him as the tutor of his children. Guillet was also placed in charge of the Yemenite horse guards, including responsibilities for training, and spent more than one year at the court by revealing his personal history to the Imam. In June 1943 he boarded an Italian Red Cross ship and, after almost two months, the Captain arrived in Rome on 3 September 1943.

Diplomatic carrer

After being promoted to major on war merit, his language knowledge and experience meant Guillet was assigned to the Military Information Service and employed in dangerous missions in Italy, which was occupied by Anglo-American troops. The armistice of 8 September was a surprise for him; he immediately crossed the *Gustav line* and went to Brindisi to be at the service of the King.

At the end of hostilities, after the defeat of the Monarchy and the victory of the Republic in the 1946 Referendum, Guillet remained faithful to his military oath to the Savoy Crown and resigned from the Italian Army.

Following the war, Guillet entered the Italian diplomatic service where he represented Italy in Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Morocco, and finally as ambassador to India until 1975. In 1971, he was in Morocco during an assassination attempt on the King.

On 4 November 2000, Guillet was presented with the Knight Grand Cross of the Military Or-



Guillet's lover Kadija



Guillet's Wife Beatrice Gandolfo



Sebastian O' Kelly

der of Italy by President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. This is the highest military decoration in Italy. The Devil Commander died in Rome on 16 June 2010 when he was 101 years old.

Conclusion

Amedeo Guillet's thorough understanding of his men and the Arabic language enabled him to develop a shared commitment in his unit and full control on its actions.

Soldiers who have a clear objective and a clear understanding of the tasks to perform feel a sense of pride and responsibility for their actions as they feel extremely useful. Guillet was able to attract Eritrean fighters to his mission by using his leadership as leverage and by convincing his soldiers that fighting the British would allow them to achieve their objective.

Such an approach proves that brave people like Guillet can generate positive, shared resilience in a unit.

By setting a good example, through actions, words, a strong sense of commitment, control of the situation or the environment and the way of responding to stressful experiences, a resilient leader can demonstrate that stress can be valuable, and stressful events might be an opportunity to learn and to improve team work in a military unit.

Amedeo Guillet seems clearly to have inspired, in his units, the typical behaviour and ways of thinking of a "*resistant personality*": a sense of control, tolerance for frustration, flexibility in thinking and attitude of hope - all aspects that normally distinguish a resilient leader.

In the face of difficulty, he was not an inert spectator, but he reacted (and of course he was stressed) based on how he "*read*" the difficulties and how he "*read*" his ability to cope with difficulties.

Amedeo had significant influence on how his subordinates experienced stressful experiences. A superior with a resilient personality can change the way soldiers "*read*" the experiences they go through in an operational environment. This aspect helps people to share values and generates mutual respect.

A resistant personality and leadership can interact to positively influence group cohesion. A good relationship between comrades, and with superiors, is important in determining one's perception of oneself and one's abilities during a mission.

About the Author

Lt. Col. Andrea MARI (ITA Army) currently serving as the CIMIC PLANS Staff Officer at Influence Division of NRDC-ITA.

Leaders in music. When the conductor is “a woman”

Lt. Col. Paola GORI, Italian Army

What are the parallels between the roles of a conductor and that of a military leader? Both lead complex teams of individuals with a variety of specialist skills. Both must mobilize and inspire this team to deliver a shared vision, while enabling the team members to maximize their individual contributions. The leader must achieve a delicate balance between defining the overall objective, building the team and developing the individuals that make up that team.

The illustrious guests at Palazzo Cusani for NRDC-ITA's “*International Leadership Seminar 2020*” included Beatrice Venezi, an internationally renowned pianist, composer and acclaimed orchestral conductor.

In 2018, Forbes magazine included her among the 100 “*young under 30*” leaders of the future. Young, female and with a strong presence on social media, she is already a very well-known musician internationally.

Equality at work, including pay and equal opportunities to advance to leadership positions, are only some of the elements that have paved the way towards the success of this young and talented conductor.

Venezi produced a fine musical performance, with very dynamic interaction with the audience that involved a nice curtain call.

In her musical performances, she demonstrated that the conductor is, *par excellence*, the true leader. Leadership is learned from one another; it is a set of skills, attitudes and behaviours that must be practised, refined and mastered by those who exercise it. In the same way that military leaders need to focus on “*what*” and “*how*” to achieve effective leadership, musicians and conductors spend time learning and practising the skills to master their art.

In a military context, the leader “*mobilizes*” others through a shared vision - a mission - and directs the individual elements united by a collective purpose to achieve identified objectives. The same happens in the orchestra. The conductor uses the tool of the trade – the “*baton*” – and arm and head movements to direct the individual sounds of the varied musical components, strategically using specific ones to achieve a unique and pleasing musical performance that matches the conductor's desire.

The military leader and the conductor both know what they want from each soldier or each musician, but they are not personally responsible for

conducting the plan or executing and generating the music. This is the responsibility of individuals who are, or might be, specialists and professionals in their own fields of expertise.

A successful leader involves his or her staff in the shared overall vision, thus leaving them sufficient independence to express the individual creativity and personal competence needed to achieve that vision. These ideas are not new. Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese military strategist, said that a leader had to be “*wise, sincere, human, courageous and severe, moreover they must always be the first in the labours and labours of the army ... successful leaders put their needs behind those of their troops. They are the leaders with character who get the most out of their employees.*”¹

Venezi expertly explained, after delighting the audience with performances of the National and NATO Anthem, that “*conducting an orchestra is, in many ways, like conducting a battle. In fact, the conductor has the task of aligning his team with a shared vision, so bursting that it is not questionable or shareable. My job is therefore to harmonize all the elements of a very complex organism, in which every single element is crucial for the achievement of the objective, and which can grow and aspire to important results, only by thinking in team terms.*”

Focusing on the term leadership, and comparing it with the two worlds, the music and the military, we notice that there are a great deal of meanings and definitions that try to describe leadership. Once again referring to “*The Art of War*”, where Sun Tzu wrote that “*Leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humanness, courage, and discipline ... Reliance on intelligence alone results in rebelliousness. Exercise of humaneness alone results in weakness. Fixation on trust results in folly. Dependence on the strength of courage results in violence. Excessive discipline and sternness in command*

¹ “The Art of War,” Sun Tzu.



Beatrice Venezi

result in cruelty. When one has all five virtues together, each appropriate to its function, then one can be a leader.”

So, we can say that, in both fields, leadership is a substantially moral and emotional activity. The job of a leader is to motivate and inspire their co-workers and employees in order to go in the desired direction and to optimally fulfil their duties. They must balance their attention between defining and achieving specific tasks, creating and developing the team and improving the people who are part of it. If the leader neglects the team, it might disintegrate. If he or she neglects the individual, the individual may not have the right space to express him or herself. In short, leaders, regardless of their character, must always maintain a constant balance between these essential needs. Therefore, leadership is an ability to convince and motivate people to achieve shared goals. The conductor directs the music in one, while the musicians follow the execution of their own piece; each of them is in fact a professional of the highest level, both for the specific nature of the instrument they play, and for the specific musical production of the piece of music being performed. Thus, a symphony orchestra represents a unique example of teamwork, collaboration, discipline, clarity of roles and intentions, learning, execution and a very effective leadership system.

During the leadership seminar, Venezi conducted a string quartet, consisting of only four musicians. However, she usually finds herself di-

recting thirty, fifty or even seventy musicians. We must also consider that traditionally an orchestra is composed of five different instrumental families - strings, wind instruments, brass instruments, percussion instruments and keyboards -, each of which has its own role, with different techniques and expressive skills. Each instrumental family in turn maintains a hierarchy of sections, with its own “first”, “the first cello”, “the first viola” and so on. At the top of all of them is “the first violin”, also known as “the shoulder”, while the conductor is at the “head” of the orchestra. The ethics of command² is influenced by how available one is to one’s men and women. Hence, the distinction between the commander who only intends to emphasize personal power and the commander whose purpose is to improve the quality of the service, *“a man does what he must - despite the personal consequences, despite the obstacles and the dangers and pressures - and this is the basis of all human morality”*, to borrow from Winston Churchill.

A leader, conductor, commander, knows how to use his or her own charisma, inspiring and motivating, as well as using technical competence, study and personal preparation. Venezi believes the leader *“is not a visionary who requires the impossible, but a strong and stable point of reference, on which the team can count and with an overview of the work to be done.”* A leader has to delegate with subordinate hierarchies, roles and tasks, leaving space for action, while

² Law 11 July 1978, No. 382 ‘Rules of Principle on Military Discipline’, from the Regulation of Implementation of Military Representation, approved with D.P.R. 4 November 1979, No. 691 and its Internal Regulation (D.M. 9 October 1985).

recognizing the qualities of their soldiers or musicians and trusting their knowledge and skills. Examining the similarities between the military world and her own, Venezi stressed that the “Master”, the conductor, the chief, the commander, normally does not provide technical indications on the various instruments they direct. In fact, it is the individual musicians, specialists and experts of their own instrument, who generate and conduct sound, following the directions of the conductor. The military leader, like the conductor, does not necessarily have to be a specialist in every area. The conductor is not required to know how to play every single instrument he/she directs, but knows the sound, the potential and the effect he/she wants to achieve. Therefore, in order to be able to direct, leaders need to trust their specialists, the skills they possess and delegate and intervene when and if it is necessary to solve a problem.

It is interesting to conclude by quoting the words of Maestro Venezi *“I believe in a different model of leadership, which is more participatory and inclusive, than in the past; no longer the figure of the director/dictator - who, moreover, is also outdated compared to the current moment in history and culture, but someone who aims to enhance and grow the individual, recognizing the results, in order to unite the different and specific skills to achieve even better results together.”*

On several occasions during the “*International Leadership Seminar 2020*”, Beatrice Vene-

zi sought interaction with the audience in the room, with musical pieces of great calibre such as the “*Ode to Joy*” by *Ludwig Van Beethoven* and “*Eine kleine Nachtmusik, Symphony 40*” by *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*.

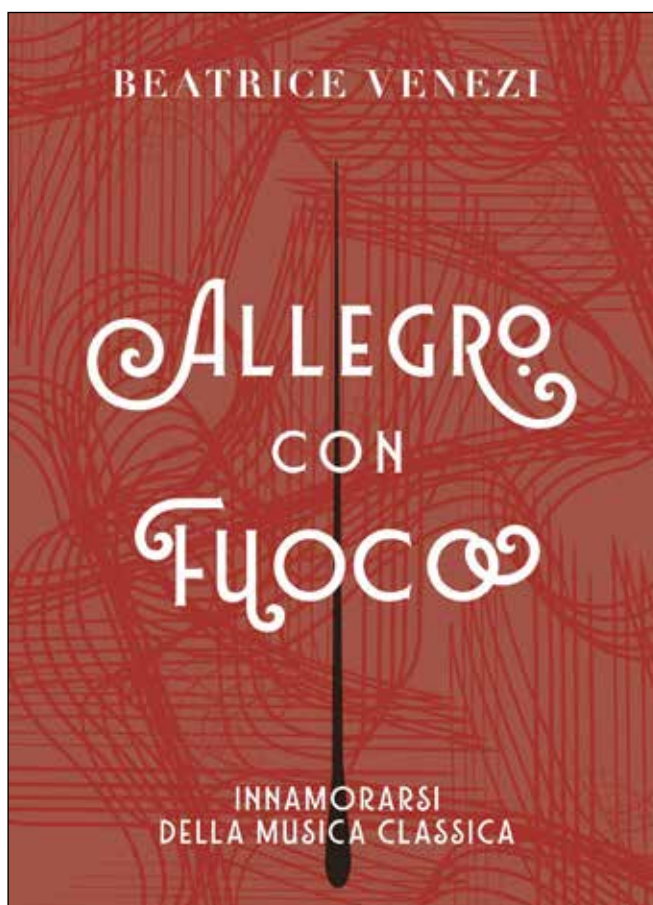
“I must not impose a conduct on myself as a leader; I must not wear the mask of the conductor. Whoever sees me sees Beatrice in the role of conductor. And the fact that I am a woman is a detail that I consider completely marginal, although impossible to hide in its evidence. I would like to talk about good or mediocre conductors, not male or female conductors,” explained Beatrice Venezi.

Conclusion

Success requires a participatory and inclusive approach to leadership.

About the Author

Lieutenant Colonel Paola GORI is a logistics Officer in the Italian Army. After a degree in Political Sciences and International Political Studies, and a Master’s Degree in Business and Marketing, she joined the Armed Forces in 2001 as one of the first women in the Army. During her years of military service, she has served for 15 years in NATO in different positions, ranging from media to logistics. In 2018 she was appointed as Staff Officer SUPPLY at NRDC-ITA HQ REAR/JLSG.



Cadorna: a leader without leadership?

A controversial Italian General.

Lt. Col. **Marco CAGNAZZO**, Italian Army

The debate about General Luigi Cadorna's leadership style during World War I has endured for over a century, making him one of the most controversial characters in recent Italian history. However, certain questions persist and require answers before any hasty conclusions are drawn.

History is full of examples of illustrious personalities who, when placed in the spotlight of judgement in hindsight, are either mythologized or demonized, thus becoming controversial. This is the case (or probably the fate) of General Luigi Cadorna who, in a long series of well-structured arguments presented by Professor MONDINI during his insightful lecture, was immediately transformed into one of the *worst leaders* in recent Italian history.

The lecturer explained, from the perspective of a university professor, the seemingly central ideas in his theory on Cadorna's poor leadership: an inability to coordinate, delegate and authorize. Cadorna was appointed Chief of the Italian Army General Staff in July 1914 and, when Italy entered World

War I by declaring war on Austria-Hungary in May 1915, he was given command of the Austro-Italian frontier. In the Professor's reasoning, at this time, Cadorna looked like an immovable "Duce", a sort of intellectual in uniform, a typical General Staff officer of his time and an exponent of an international community of generals. Although described as an excellent war theorist and a good writer with an ironclad memory, Cadorna always acted with the typical ethics of an aristocrat from his Mobilized Supreme Command in Udine (a sort of feudal court in which he surrounded himself with a small group of loyalists and yes-men). The combination of his abstract nature and tendency to see himself as the last descendant of the caste of feudal knights was not his only problem, as his bad behaviour also reflected in his organization of command that, in the Professor's explanation, was a total disaster. This was evident at Caporetto in autumn 1917 during the lightning offensive conducted by the Austro-Hungarian and German Armies against an Italian Army in which half of the officers had already died or been severely injured in the first six months of the war because of Cadorna's orders.

The question arises whether or not all these criticisms against Luigi Cadorna are true. Let's have a look at what really happened in that tragic period at the start of the 20th century to try to objectively gauge his leadership skills from another perspective. Basically, all commanders of land forces at the onset of WWI failed to grasp the nature of the total war they were heading into. Nobody realized the consequences of the dramatic increase in both the manpower and firepower available to the forces in the field, one of the reasons why almost every command quickly lost control over events. Even the detailed planning of the German General Staff proved delusional and brought upon themselves the failure on the Marne. Cadorna was no exception. Like



er
verywhere rapidly



every one of his peers, he belonged to an *old school* favouring manoeuvre, and collided with battlefield conditions that made manoeuvre impossible because of the field fortifications and direct firepower of the enemy, factors that led to unacceptable attrition. As a result, all offensive initiatives taken by the early leaders ended up in dramatic failures. In Cadorna's case, an already gloomy situation was made even more dire by the nature of the terrain (the highest mountains in Europe) and by the shortness of the front-line, which made manoeuvre even more impossible and troop density even thicker, leading to casualty percentages that exceeded even those in France. That said, it is extremely easy to identify all Cadorna's mistakes. What is more challenging is to identify alternatives. What should Cadorna have done instead as a leader?

In 1914, as a member of the Triple Entente, Cadorna was ready to begin operations on the Austro-German side against France which, based on the strategic plans, foresaw deploying an Italian Army in Alsace to support the German Schlieffen Plan. There were very limited plans for operations against Austria, and these were all defensive in nature. No one had foreseen offensive operations in the Eastern Alps, so he needed to improvise in 1915. With no clear superiority in the high mountains of Trentino and no maritime superiority in the Adriatic Sea, frontal offensive in the Isonzo sector seemed the only option. The absence of previous political guidance and no long standing strategic plan there created the conditions for a lack of consistency in the manoeuvre,

which had no clear strategic objective. Probably Cadorna's main mistake was the absolute lack of any attempt to achieve at least tactical surprise when he enjoyed clear numerical superiority: the failure to achieve a breakthrough at *the first battle* of Isonzo led to the following meat-grinder. But even if the breakthrough had been achieved then, how deep would it have been possible to go before logistics limited the advance? There were no vital objectives close to the border and getting stuck in the Julian Alps rather than on the Isonzo would have made little difference in military terms. Maybe in political terms it would have paid off. But would a tactical surprise be possible at all in 1915 considering the terrain, mobilization and even military honour? Whatever the price he paid, in 1917 Cadorna had managed to wear down the Austrian Army to the point that they had to beg Germany for help, forcing Ludendorff (German general, politician and military theorist who first achieved fame during World War I for his central role in the German Army's victories at Liège and Tannenberg in 1914) to deploy a full German Army to prevent the collapse of the Austrian front, which depleted the Western front of forces that may have been decisive there. This Army, employing advanced infiltration tactics, achieved the Caporetto breakthrough, which actually surprised the same German command. But this same offensive might as easily have failed, and in this case, could having forced Germany to remove so many troops from France be seen as a major achievement by Cadorna?

Repeated failures in breaking the enemy front on the Isonzo led to a multitude of criticism in 1916-17. Average as he was as a leader, Cadorna managed not only to maintain his position as the Chief of the Army General Staff for an unusually long time, but he also enjoyed a high degree of prestige and respect despite his well-known arrogance and general bad temperament. How was this possible? Why was he never removed before 1917? Who would have been a more suitable leader instead?

Conclusion

All the above questions still remain unanswered. What we know for sure is that *leadership* pertains to superior animals. The set of skills that combine to form this characteristic may be both innate, like charisma, and learned, like knowledge. The fact is that there is no fixed formula for leadership: the only path to leadership is to lead. Humans have developed some tools to enhance this concept: these are mostly symbolic (ranks, uniforms, accessories to wear or to carry) or formal in nature. The most important of the latter is the concept of *delegated authority*: with this, an individual is assigned a leading position within the group by a higher echelon leader. And this is what happened to Cadorna that allowed him to keep his position for a long time. If the higher echelon's choice has proven to have had some value for the Italian people as a whole at

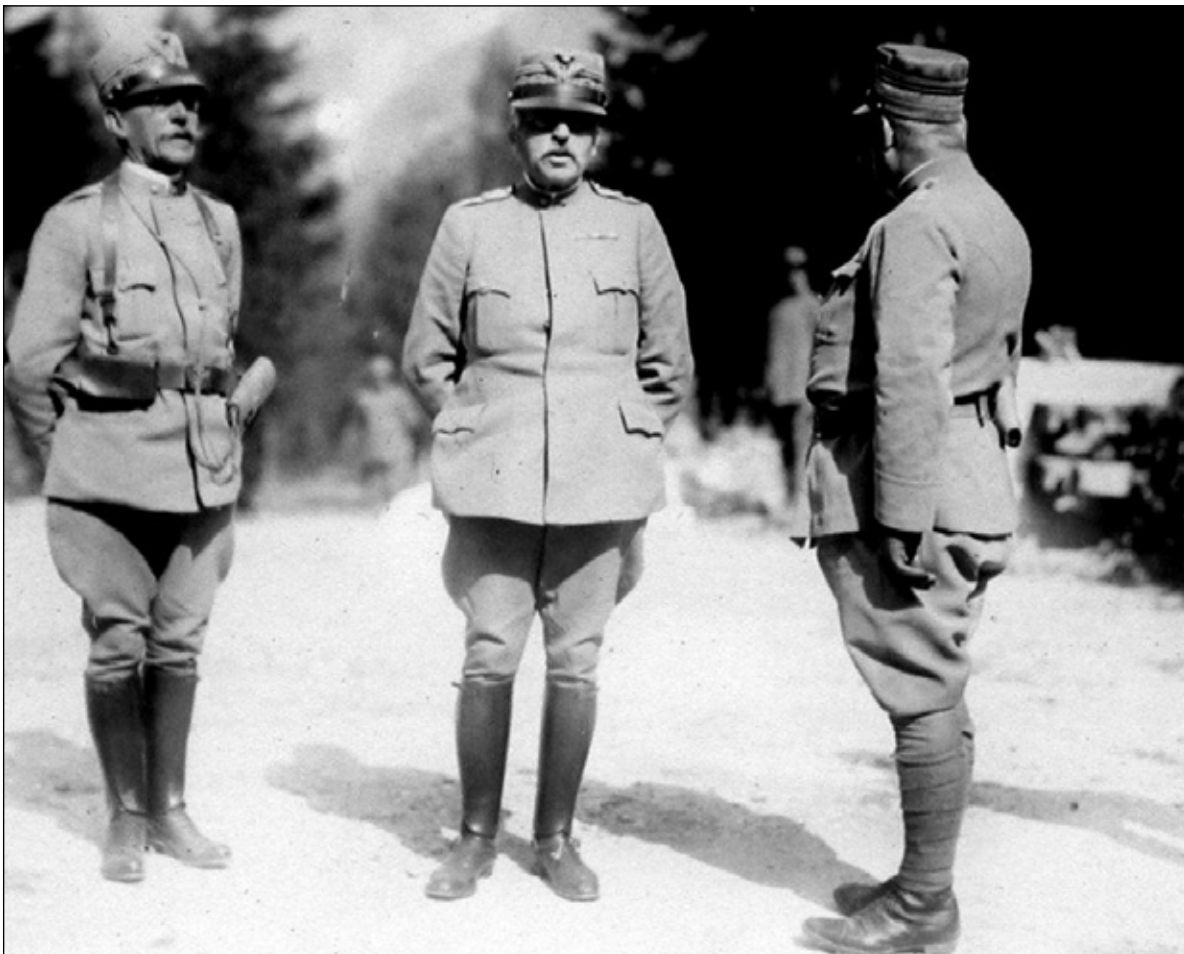
that time and in those conditions, it is not up to us to pass judgement. Unless we want to rise as undisputed judges of history.



Marco Mondini

About the Author

Lieutenant Colonel Marco CAGNAZZO is an Italian Army Officer, currently serving as the Deputy Intelligence Branch Chief (DACOS J2) at the NRDC-ITA.



Gen. Cadorna with his officers

Giovanni Messe, the last Field Marshal of Italy

Lt. Col. Cesare COLANERO, Italian Army

Field Marshal Giovanni Messe was perhaps the only Italian who was able to stand up to Rommel and Montgomery in World War II. From the beginning of his career he was described as an outstanding Officer with great organizational capabilities and as a charismatic commander. He fought in nineteen different battles and was injured several times, but throughout he showed he was a true leader, able to find the right balance between foresight, performance and character. He was loyal to Emperor Victor Emmanuel III and not a keen sympathizer of the fascist regime. In fact, unlike other generals, he never joined the National Fascist Party. At the same time, he maintained the confidence and the respect of Benito Mussolini, with whom he was always frank and sincere. In this regard, it is worth quoting an episode that occurred during Mussolini's visit to the Greek front. In response to the Duce saying: *"I have seen troops massacred ferociously"*, Messe answered *"the soldiers are not ready to be massacred; this merely shows they are not ready for war."* This was neither the first nor the last time Messe contradicted Mussolini. Furthermore, throughout his military career he not only had to fight external adversaries, but also some internal detractors. Many generals were jealous of his leadership, charisma and the esteem of the troops for him, and of his brilliant career earned on merit. Perhaps the best example is this: at the end of WWII, Badoglio¹ opposed his repatriation from prison in Great Britain with the excuse that Messe should not be treated differently to the other Italian generals imprisoned at the end of the war.

Biography

Giovanni Messe was born in Mesagne (Brindisi), Italy, on 10 December 1883. In 1901, at the age of eighteen he began his military service. His outstanding career took him to the very top for a member of the military at that time: Marshal of Italy during World War II. He fought in all the major wars that Italy conducted (the conquest of Libya (1911-1912), World War I, Second Italo-Abyssinian War, the Greek-Italian War and World War II).

In 1903 he was promoted to Sergeant and sent to China for 2 years. In October 1908, he entered the Military Academy, ending up as the best student (1st among 61 in the first year and 16th among 290 candidates in the second year), and was promoted to second lieutenant in 1910. He was promoted to lieutenant in 1913 and captain on 17 November 1915.



Giovanni Messe

During World War I, Major Giovanni Messe was the Commander of the 9th Parachute Assault Regiment (*IX Reparto "Arditi"*) on Monte Grappa. At that time, he formed and trained the "Arditi",

1 Pietro Badoglio, 28 Sept. 1871 - 1 Nov. 1956, General and Statesman during the dictatorship of Benito Mussolini (1922-43). Upon the downfall of Mussolini (25 July 1943), Badoglio became prime minister. In September 1943 he withdrew Italy from World War II by arranging an armistice with the Allied forces. He was made a Field Marshal on 26 May 1926.



Massimo De Leonardis

a special Infantry Unit of the Royal Italian Army. Notably, on 24 June 1918, in the victorious attack on Monte Asolone during which more than 700 enemy soldiers were captured, he suffered the loss of his valorous flag-bearer *Ciro Scianna*. This episode was illustrated by *Beltrame*² in a painting for “*Domenica del Corriere*”, a weekly with a circulation of over half a million copies. At that time, such was the enthusiasm of the “*Arditi*” for their commander that, as they launched the assault on the enemy, they shouted “*Messe*” instead of the more usual “*Savoia*”. This is a clear example of his great leadership: such was the feeling of faith and trust he managed to instil in his soldiers, he did not need to persuade them as he inspired them.³ *Messe* was a perfect mix of the authoritarian, the democratic and the participative leadership styles.⁴ He was always aware of the strengths and weaknesses of his tactics and ready to be flexible with his behaviour to obtain the best from his officers and soldiers. His reputation, his accomplishments and his well-known loyalty to the monarchy from 1923 till 1927 led to his appointment as the military-secretary to King Victor Emmanuel III. It was quite unusual for an Officer of humble origins to hold such a position. These years helped him

to understand politics better and reinforced his faith in the monarchy.

After being promoted to Colonel, he commanded another Infantry Unit of the Royal Italian Army until 1935, when he was promoted to Brigadier General in command of a motorized brigade, taking part in the Second Italo-Abyssinian War (1935-1936). Then as a Major General he was assigned to command an Italian Armoured Division. After a short spell of duty in Albania, from October 1940 to April 1941, *Messe* commanded a corps of Italian soldiers in the Greek-Italian War and, afterwards, he was sent to Russia as the Commander of the “*Corpo di Spedizione Italiano in Russia (C.S.I.R.)*” or Italian Expeditionary Corps in Russia, a light infantry and cavalry corps. In November 1942 he was called back to Italy and sent, in January of 1943, to fight the American and Commonwealth forces in Tunisia. There, on the African front, he commanded the First Italian Army. On 12 May 1943, Giovanni *Messe* became Marshal of Italy. He was taken prisoner on 13 May 1943 when he received orders from Mussolini to surrender; he then spent several months in England near Oxford.

While he was held prisoner, Italy signed an armistice with the Allies. *Messe*, loyal to the King,

² Achille Beltrame was an Italian illustrator and painter. He was the author of the famous covers of the weekly “*La Domenica del Corriere*” for almost half a century.

³ Management is about persuading people to do things they do not want to do, while leadership is about inspiring people to do things they never thought they could.” — Steve Jobs.

⁴ Leadership Styles (3-Style Model) - Kurt Lewin, 1939. Kurt Lewin identified three behavioral styles among leaders. Authoritarian (Sometimes called the Autocratic style. This is where leaders spell out the goals, deadlines and methods while making decisions on their own with little consultation with others). Participative: This is where the leader expresses his or her priorities and values in setting goals and making decisions, but also takes part in the group's work and accepts advice and suggestions from colleagues. Delegative: The Delegative style means the leader hands over responsibility for results to the group. If you bear in mind the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, you can match them to your circumstances - provided, of course, you can flex your behavior. This is when the Three Styles model becomes a guide to more effective leadership.

was repatriated to Italy and given the position of Chief of Staff of the Italian Co-Belligerent Army (*Esercito Italiano di Co-belligeranza*). He served in this position until the end of World War II in 1945.

This event also marked the end of his 44 years of rare dedication and commitment. Giovanni Messe was elected Senator of the Italian Republic on 27 March 1947. He was President of the Italian Veterans Association. His dedication to his troops seems never to have faltered.

Field Marshal Giovanni Messe died in Rome on 19 December 1968. He was 85 years old.

In summary, in his military career there are three moments of extreme importance: being part of the C.S.I.R., commanding the First Italian Army in Tunisia and the reconstitution of the Italian Army. In the first two, called by Mussolini because of his exceptional skills and qualities, used all his leadership values in commanding troops in two completely different environments (from the extreme cold of Russia to the extreme heat of Tunisia).

In the third key moment, his loyalty to the monarchy and his idea of “state” helped him show strong leadership in rebuilding the morale of a disbanded army, standing against all the people trying to “recycle” themselves for selfish reasons and against all the people who doubted and feared a strong reconstituted Italian Army.

Part of C.S.I.R.

For reasons of prestige, Mussolini decided to be part of the Russia campaign. On 14 July 1941, Messe was appointed Commander of the Italian Expeditionary Corps in Russia (C.S.I.R.), and the next day he departed with 216 trains and with the entire contingent for the Eastern Front in Russia. The Corps could count on 62,000 soldiers. However, a lack of motor vehicles and the limited availability of an inadequate type of tank (light tanks compared to the heavy tanks of the Germans and Russians) made his advance extremely difficult. Soldiers had to march long distances on foot, with the temperature dropping to 37 degrees Celsius below zero at times. The Corps also did not have enough uniforms and boots. This led to 3,000 cases of frostbite among his men. Logistics were inadequate due to the long distance between the front and the location of the logistics unit. Sometimes a few hours of rain would cause mud on the streets that could delay re-supplying the troops for days. Despite the dire logistics situation, he was, as always, able

to motivate his troops and his officers, showing great leadership. He participated in the 1941-1942 operations in Ukraine, fighting victoriously from the Dnieper River to the Don and earning the Commander's Cross of the Military Order of Savoy and two decorations of German Valour. At the same time, as he was a man of honour, he never approved of the hard approach adopted by the Germans nor the unnecessary exploitation of local resources in occupied areas. There was a big difference in how Italian and German troops (violence, cruelty and unfairness) treated the local population and prisoners of war. He obliged the Italian troops to pay the local population for available goods.⁵ It was one of the first examples of what is now understood and known in the world as the attitude of the “Italian soldier”. The corps managed to advance despite the harsh conditions, but the German command demanded even more effort. It was then that Messe strongly opposed and stood up to the Nazi generals by explaining that the means available to the Italians were limited and that, despite everything, his men were already doing their best. He was genuinely impressed by the capability of Italian soldiers, their dedication and bravery. He also protested with Italy's allies about the lack of adequate supplies, which did not comply with the terms of the agreements (the Italian-German convention signed on 27 June 1941 was never completely in force, especially in terms of supply).

Messe protested several times to the higher Commands in Italy about the inadequate equipment of his troops in Russia.⁶ As a good leader, he was aware of the strengths of troops that were fighting on the Eastern Front, and the weaknesses in logistics and equipment. His troops were fighting at the same level, if not better, than the better supplied and sustained Germans. He was an intelligent, capable observer of the battlefield, so it was evident to him that, in order to win, better support would be needed from his homeland and from the Germans. And he tirelessly sought such support. Despite the harsh conditions and the dire logistics, in the summer of 1942 Mussolini created the Arm.I.R. (Italian Army in Russia), with 7,000 officers and 220 thousand soldiers. On 20 May 1942, General Messe – during a brief cessation in operations – returned to Italy to try to convince Mussolini it was not appropriate to send more troops to Russia. His reading of the situation in the field was it was necessary not to increase numbers, but to improve the effectiveness in the war of the whole formation. The

5 Hope Hamilton, author of “Sacrificio nella steppa”, Rizzoli Ed. says: “Messe preferred to reduce the food rations for his men rather than exploit the local population. He prohibited the requisition of local houses in the German manner. General Messe explained to his troops that the supply obtained from the local population should be paid for in full and not obtained by force.”

6 Prof. Maria Teresa Giusti, author of the book “I prigionieri Italiani in Russia”, Ed. Il Mulino, underlines how “General Giovanni Messe, Commander of the CSIR, strongly protested and has been replaced, because he defined as murderers those who decided to send soldiers to Russia who were not adequately equipped for the extremely cold temperatures.”



Messe reviews the troops

Duce famously replied “I have to be alongside the Fuhrer in Russia as he was alongside me in Greece and is still in Africa. Furthermore, at the peace table, the weight of 220,000 soldiers of the Army in Russia will be much more than the 62,000 of the C.S.I.R.”

In the attempt to please his allies, Mussolini appointed General Italo Gariboldi to command Arm.I.R. Gariboldi was a Senior General who was well accepted by the Germans. However, he soon clashed with Giovanni Messe, who was highly critical on the lack of tanks and suitable vehicles for a war on Russian soil. During the first defensive battle of the Don (Aug-Sept 1942), because of German interference and clashes with Gen. Gariboldi, Messe asked to be replaced. This was a painful decision for him as he felt like he was betraying and abandoning his soldiers - soldiers he was responsible for. General Messe was repatriated on 1 November 1942 but, before leaving, he wrote a farewell message to his troops in which he expressed his regret at leaving them in Russia. The “Russian” experience further developed his strong character and showed, once more, his capacity for leadership. He was a professional soldier with foresight, always in the front line with the troops, always fighting for and with his men. These feelings for his soldiers can be better understood by read his own words as Field Marshal Messe wrote several books. In one of his books *“La Guerra al Fronte Russo”* Ed. Mursia, a chapter is dedicated to the operation called the “Action of Chazepetovka”.

A passage from his chapter is worth mentioning:

“The Action of Chazepetovka was among the harshest fought by the C.S.I.R. because of its duration (ten days), the weather and the enemy’s fierce resistance. The main players were the Torino Division, under General Manzi, and the 79th Infantry Regiment of the Pasubio Division, commanded by Colonel Blasioli. After the heavy snowfall of the previous days, the weather was serene. The thermometer kept to 30 degrees below zero in the few hours of daylight and dropped significantly at night. Weapons blocked every time they were fired. Oils and anti-freezing fats were not enough to protect the guns or the limbs of the men. On the smooth ice crust, stepping was a continuous balancing act, the horses had to be supported by the riders, wheels slid and, on the slopes, it was impossible not to slip. In the hollows the men sank up to their chests in the soft snow. In these conditions it is easy to imagine how the advance soon became exhausting. Hot drinks had to be consumed all at once to prevent them from freezing in the water bottles; hot foods froze as soon as they were removed from the cooking crates. In the inevitable stops, soldiers lying motionless on the frozen ground were at risk that the numbness of freezing would gradually invade their extremities and limbs.”

The description in the book of these exceptional conditions shows the effort faced by the Italian Infantry troops and the exceptional physical and moral endurance of those troops during the operations in Russia. But, for these soldiers, Messe’s leadership was fundamental. He was a clear example of a leader,⁷ going to the frontline and sharing the dangers with them, giving them the enthusiasm needed to overcome adversity.

⁷ Daniel Goleman, author of “What Makes a Leader?”, 85 years later, in the Harvard business review classic series, writes: “The fundamental task of leaders is to trigger positive feelings in the people they lead. This happens when they know how to create resonance – a reserve of positivity that frees up what is best in each individual. In its essence, therefore, the primary task of leadership is emotional in nature. If well conducted, it can be very powerful in arousing inspiration, passion and enthusiasm, in fostering commitment and involvement, and in keeping the morale of those to whom it is directed.”



Messe with Rommel

Moreover, realizing how important a “word” from family was for the spirit of the fighters, Messe placed great importance on the efficiency of the postal service. He tirelessly demanded an efficient service, knowing the importance of good morale on the willingness of troops to fight.

First Italian Army in Tunisia

After his “Russian experience”, on 1 November 1942 he returned to Italy and was promoted on merit to Army General. At the same time, the Axis Troops were in the process of being defeated on the African front where vast American and British forces were arriving. Mussolini attempted to play the “Mass card” to stop the Anglo-Americans in Tunisia and to prevent them from making their way to Europe. Realizing he needed a charismatic and great leader to revive the enthusiasm of the tired troops that were fighting in Africa, Mussolini appointed Messe to the Head of the Italian-German Tank Army in Tunisia, which had been commanded by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel up till then.⁸ The Army changed name to the First Italian Army as it consisted of three Italian corps and one German corps. Drawing on his reputation and the esteem in which the troops held him – they saw in him as a kind of “hero” and a great commander – in just 20 days Messe revived exhausted units, rekindling the light of pride in them. But, once again his strong character, and his ability to clearly visualize the battlefield and the resources needed to win the fight against the enemy caused friction

with the Germans. He clashed with Rommel, who left Africa forever on 9 March 1943. The “Desert Fox” was not there when Messe led the battle of the Mareth from late February to early May 1943 and prevented the Allies from breaking through. English radio attributed the harsh resistance to Rommel’s genius. “*In their pomposity,*” Messe commented, “*they do not admit that they have been beaten by an Italian General.*” Montgomery later paid tribute to him.⁹ But at that time, as effective as the “Mass strategy” was, everything was against him. The situation was desperate, Montgomery had 500 tanks and complete air superiority; Messe had just sixteen tanks left. Furthermore, the Germans of the Afrika Korps were in a worse state, only able to count on two wagons. The end was approaching inexorably. His tactical delay of the Allied offensive could not prevent the inevitable defeat of the Axis in North Africa. On 8 May 1943, the Allies conquered Tunis. On 12 May, 1 or 2 days after of the Germans capitulation, the Duce sent Messe the order to surrender: “*You are appointed Marshal of Italy, honour to you and your soldiers.*” Messe was the last person to be awarded that title established by Mussolini. Even on this occasion he showed his great leadership. In fact, like the Duke of Aosta in Ethiopia, Messe refused to be transported to Italy to avoid imprisonment. Together with Lieutenant General Taddeo Orlando and Lieutenant General Paolo Berardi, both faithful to their Commander, Messe was transferred to England, to a location near Oxford. Messe’s attitude surprised the British. Prof. Maria Teresa Giusti, in her introduction to the book

⁸ Rommel, referring those days, had to say “The German soldiers stunned the world, the Italian Bersaglieri stunned the German soldiers.”

⁹ Montgomery met Messe a few hours after his imprisonment and there was a quarrel between them on the battle of the Mareth. Montgomery, in the end, adopted a more comrade-like tone. He led Messe to his wagon and showed him a photograph of Rommel on his table. Montgomery told Messe that he had always wondered, before each battle, what the German Marshal would do in his place. And he added, “If I had known that from Mareth on I was fighting against you, I would have procured your photograph.”

*“Giovanni Messe, Lettere alla Moglie”*¹⁰, reports a particular moment of Messe’s imprisonment: *“General Freyberg asked Messe: is the Marshal a fascist? Messe quite calmly answered: of course. Surprised the General asked: why of course? Messe answered: because if the King, who I am honoured to serve, accepted a fascist as Head of the Government, I accept him too!”*¹¹ As a prisoner, Messe stayed in England a little more than five months. In this period, together with Generals Berardi and Orlando, he solidly and repeatedly stated his enduring loyalty to the King. In the meantime, the Kingdom of Italy was no longer considered an enemy but as a co-belligerent state, even if not yet accepted as an ally. Messe was anxious to offer his services to his country under the command of the King and Badoglio to fight the Germans, if required. Marshal Pietro Badoglio was at the time Head of the Italian Government. He was advised that Messe was seen by the public as the only General who could galvanize and reconstitute the Italian Army. However, when the Allies were about to free Messe and his fellow Generals Berardi and Orlando, Badoglio told them that he did not consider this repatriation convenient, stating that the same initiative could not be taken with other worthy generals.

The reconstitution of the Italian Army

After the fall of fascism and Italy joining the Allies, on 7 November he was transferred to Brindisi. Badoglio tried to side-line Messe offering him the position of General Inspector of the Army. As Professor Massimo de Leonardis, in his speech during the International Leadership Seminar in Milan, Palazzo Cusani in January 2020 stated: *“Badoglio was jealous of Messe. Messe strongly protested and, supported by the King, in November 1943 was appointed Chief of the General Staff, with Berardi Chief of the Army and Orlando Under-Secretary of War. It was a cohesive team that trusted each other and had the same loyalty to the King.”* Messe was respected by the “old” enemies but, in the attempt to re-build the Armed Forces, he clashed with the senior officers who were trying to recycle themselves and, equally, with the Allies who did not trust a reconstituted Italian Army. The aim of the King was to have as many Italian troops as possible fighting alongside the Allies. Messe



Giovanni Messe

repeatedly asked to employ an Italian Division in Italy against the Germans. However, on one side the leftist antifascist party was afraid that a resurgent and victorious Royal Army could enhance the prestige of the monarchy;¹² on the other side, using the Italians would implicitly mean softening the conditions to be imposed in the future peace treaty. However, especially at the beginning, American generals¹³ had a poor opinion of the Italian Army. The *“Italians”* were either used as a labour force in the rear or as auxiliary troops, avoiding combat roles. They also depleted Italian stores of weapons, ammunitions and equipment. Messe was tireless in pressing for Italian troops to play a greater combat role. In the end, Italy and Messe were quite successful in fighting with the Allies, with the good performance of the Italian Units convincing the Allies to increase their numbers. In summer 1944, various Allied Divisions were transferred to France and were replaced by Italian Units. As Prof. de Leonardis highlighted *“One out of four of the soldiers employed in the Italian campaign was Italian and one out of eight was employed among the fighting troops”*. At the same time, the Italian General Staff, under the leadership of Marshal Messe, gave full support to the partisans fighting in the central and northern areas of Italy occupied by the Germans. Giovanni Messe left the uniform on 4 April 1947.

A (Maybe Misunderstood) great leader

Giovanni Messe was the last Field Marshal of Italy, a rank that was given only to thirteen Generals of the Air Force, Navy or Army. If one thinks that the Air Force only gave this rank to

10 Maria Teresa Giusti, *“Giovanni Messe, Lettere alla Moglie. Dai Fronti Greco-Albanese, Russo, Tunisino e dalla prigionia 1940-1944”*, Ed Mursia 2018.

11 Ibid., page number 55.

12 Prof. de Leonardis during the International Leadership Seminar: “Carlo Sforza, a prominent antifascist, denounced Messe writing to the American Assistant Secretary of State “many are afraid he may evolve into a South American hero.” Winston Churchill, who was the most favorable to using the Italians and considered the Italian Theatre very important for political and military reasons, did not believe in this complaint.”

13 “They are still using the mules”. As we know the mules were very important on the mountains and were still used in Afghanistan a few years ago.



Infantryman **Ciro Scianna** dies in the arms of Major **Messe**, kissing the Italian flag.
Illustration from *Domenica del Corriere*

Italo Balbo and one then compares the name of Italo Balbo, known all around the world, with the name of Giovanni Messe, it is hard to understand why. He fought in five wars, rose through the ranks on merit and was wounded several times because he was always leading his troops from the frontline. He was respected in Russia by his German allies and in Africa by the British leaders. He was a charismatic leader loved by his officers and soldiers and was always, at the cost of his life, loyal to the King. Notwithstanding this, his role in history in the first half of the 20th century remains heavily underestimated. It is telling but, at the same time, inexplicable that in his hometown, Mesagne, there is a long-standing dispute about the tribute that should be provided to its most illustrious citizen, *nemo propheta in Patria*. Messe was a clear example of a charismatic leader and a valuable man who could lead his troops by example, always present with them, showing all the qualities that an Officer should have. Before being a soldier of honour, Messe was a man of honour. He always complied with the duties and the rules of military honour. On the other hand, Messe stood strongly behind his ideas, which differed from the socialist ones, and enthused the nation and the monarchy. He was a self-made man like so many others but, like few others, he succeeded in doing so. And he stayed faithful to that idea all his life.

Conclusion

Nowadays, more than ever because of the CORONAVIRUS outbreak, leaders do not need a predefined response plan but behaviours and mindsets that will prevent them from overreacting

to daily developments and help them look further ahead. In a modern article “*Leadership in a crisis: Responding to the coronavirus outbreak and future challenges*,”¹⁴ the authors describe how leaders should react to crises. “*Recognizing that there is a crisis is the first thing leaders must do. Once leaders recognize a crisis as such, they can begin to mount a response. But they cannot respond as they would in a routine emergency, by following plans that had been drawn up in advance. During a crisis, effective responses are largely improvised. Senior leaders must also make sure that they empower the right people. In routine emergencies, experience is perhaps the most valuable quality, but in novel, landscape-scale crises, character is of the utmost importance. Another important quality is ‘bounded optimism’, or confidence combined with realism. In practice, this means frequently pausing from crisis management, assessing the situation from multiple advantage points, anticipating what may happen next, and then acting. Once leaders decide what to do, they must act with resolve. Visible decisiveness not only builds the organization’s confidence in leaders, it also motivates the teams for solutions to the challenges that the organization faces.*” Reading the article and the qualities that characterize a leader, it is clear that Messe could be taken as an example of a great leader even today. He had the right behaviour and mindset, with a forward-looking vision to face the battles he fought, extraordinary knowledge and dedication to the given mission and a strong character that helped him to make decisions and act. As a leader he always chose the right people around him and gave great importance to triggering positive feelings in the people he led, inspiring his soldiers and receiving the best from each of them. He was a charismatic man of honour, faithful to his ideas and, moreover, he never ran away from his responsibilities. To sum up, he was a clear example of a great leader that will endure the sands of time and memories.

About the Author

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¹⁴ Gemma D’Auria and Aaron De Smet, McKinsey’s & Company, March 2020. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/leadership-in-a-crisis-responding-to-the-coronavirus-outbreak-and-future-challenges#>.



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