



*Moltke and His Generals: A Study in Leadership* by Quintin Barry.

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Review by Michael A. Boden, Dutchess Community College (michael.boden@sunydutchess.edu).

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In this new study of Helmuth von Moltke's shaping of the Prussian General Staff after he became Chief of Staff in 1857, military historian Quintin Barry concentrates on his relations with specific, key subordinates, including some talented younger officers. His findings will not surprise specialists in the field, since they represent familiar positions and are based on secondary sources and published memoirs. His thesis is that

the military success of the Prussian army owed much not only to the chief of its General Staff, but also to his relationship with those that were to execute his plans and intentions. Inevitably, they were not always successful in this; but it was part of Moltke's achievement that his relationship with his generals was so effective. (33)

Barry's narrative proceeds sometimes topically, sometimes chronologically. Chapters 1-3 provide the necessary background information and an overview of Moltke's military theories and attitudes. Chapter 4 then turns to his relationship with other members of the German High Command, starting, logically enough, with the man who put him in his position, Kaiser Wilhelm I. Each of these individuals felt, Barry writes, a strong professional and personal respect for the other, though they did at times disagree, for example, concerning Army operations during the siege of Paris.

Barry next shifts to his main subject, proceeding through the Wars of Unification, often "re-starting" when another highlighted individual is introduced. Chapters 5-8 center on Moltke's increasingly strained relations with the talented, but outspoken, Karl Leonhard von Blumenthal, who served as Chief of Staff for multiple formations up to the Versailles treaty.

Chapters 9-10 concern Albrecht von Stosch, especially in his role of confidant of Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm from the later 1860s through operations in the Loire Valley in 1870-71. These chapters are particularly valuable for the light they shed on one of Moltke's most reliable senior officers, too often neglected in the literature.

The author now returns to the early 1860s and the career of another member of the royal family, Prince Friedrich Karl. As in previous sections of the book, Barry begins (in chap. 11) with his target figure, in this case the "Red Prince" himself, then details the Battle of Königgrätz (chap. 12), the siege of Metz (chap. 13), and operations around Le Mans (chap. 14), relying on the contemporary account of Field Marshal Alfred Waldersee, who rated the prince as a "mediocre" talent, overly methodical (hence frustrating Moltke), and temperamental. Barry considers him a better general than the verdict of history would have it (180).

Chapter 15 reverts in time to discuss further Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, already introduced in sections on Blumenthal and Stosch. Chapters 16-17 focus on Edwin von Manteuffel's relationship with Moltke and his role in the German Army. Barry concludes that Moltke held him in higher regard than he did most of his subordinates.

Chapters 18-21 address, respectively, August von Goeben, Karl von Steinmetz, August von Werder, and Eduard Vogel von Falckenstein. Chapter 22, "Demigods," takes a collective look at

the members of Moltke's "hand picked team" of General Staff officers (256), including his Quartermaster-General Theophil von Podbielski, operations section head Paul Bronsart von Schellendorf, transport and supply head Karl von Brandenstein, and intelligence section head Julius von Verdy du Vernois. Barry does not take his narrative beyond German Unification, thus omitting many officers of the Imperial General Staff who became prominent in 1870–80. Oddly, Herwarth von Bittenfeld, Army commander in 1864 and 1866, gets only brief mentions throughout the book.

The author's sequential narrative is a natural way to introduce his large cast of characters. But he spends too much time on vignettes at the expense of a consistent and comprehensive analytical arc. And, too, his heavy reliance on long quotations of individuals' own words, linked by bits of connecting narrative, often obscures our view of Moltke himself, especially when he is assessing royals like Friedrich Karl and Friedrich Wilhelm. Discrete biographical passages predominate over leadership analysis.

In a book designed to highlight Moltke's relations with his subordinates, Barry reaches the conclusion that his success derived mostly from his frequent and astute use of written "general directives." "It is thus to the voluminous military correspondence written under the pressure of events that one must turn to distil the essential nature of Moltke's relationships with his commanders" (270). In the end, Moltke's subordinates were effective to the extent that they followed such orders. Less effective were, for instance, Steinmetz and Falckenstein, because they were "obstinate, self-willed individuals who responded badly to direction" (269).

In sum, Quintin Barry provides an accessible, solid account of command realities in the German armies during the Wars of Unification, with valuable, straightforward, if compartmentalized, investigations of Moltke's dealings with his leading subordinates. He is less successful, however, in providing any in-depth analysis of Moltke's leadership in the decade or so before unification. Readers new to the study of the nineteenth-century Prussian/Imperial General Staff will benefit from *Moltke and His Generals* much more than will students and scholars of the era.