



Marshal Lyautey in the service of France

military-Earth thinking notebook

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Histoire & stratégie

Marshal Hubert Lyautey occupies a respectable and impregnable place in history, which some have tried to challenge him to make him forget, but without success. Some have tried to challenge him to make him forget, but without success, agreeing with Louis Barthou, former president of the Council and academician, who wrote in his preface to "Paroles d'action" (1927): "Marshal Lyautey can confidently await the judgment of history".

Much is said about history on the occasion of the celebrations and commemorations, debates and publications that are being held to mark the centenary of the four years of the 1914-18 war, and Lyautey has his rightful place in them.

The year 2016, marked by the centenary of his appointment as Minister of War on 12 December, should provide an opportunity not only to explore his role during the Great War, but also to assess his visions of the global consequences of that conflict.

The more Lyautey will be spoken of and the more objectively he will be spoken of with the objectivity that characterizes historians worthy of the name, the more it will be verified that by his example and his visions, he deserves to serve as a reference point for the thinkers and decision-makers of our time.

This is undoubtedly the meaning that should be given to this sentence which concluded General de Gaulle's presidential speech at the reception of Marshal Lyautey's ashes at the Invalides on 10 May 1961: "In truth, Marshal Lyautey has not finished serving France".

Hubert Lyautey continues, more than 80 years after his death, to astonish, fascinate and even seduce those who come across him through his numerous writings, his die-cut formulas but always struck at the corner of common sense, his prophetic views. He is also interested in the relationships that have been made in his epic, marked not by intentions and empty promises, but by his own personal and personal experiences. He is also

interested in the relations that have been made of his epic, marked not by intentions and empty promises, but by thoughtful actions and unquestionable achievements referring to a true VISION, that of the GREATER FRANCE in a world in the midst of EVOLUTION.

Before highlighting the significant events which mark out its existence and sometimes determine it, let us take a moment to look at the person who was awarded the dignity of Marshal of France following the 1914-18 war.

He was France's Resident Commissioner General in Morocco for 13 years, from 1912 to 1925, Minister of War, and a member of the French Academy. He was also General Commissioner of the 1931 International Colonial Exhibition, President of the French Aeronautical Propaganda Committee and Honorary President of all the scouting federations in France.

Considering all of his various activities, he was in turn or at the same time soldier, peacemaker, diplomat, administrator, builder and town planner, writer and protector of the arts and, in all cases, a beacon for youth.

Above all, he was a conqueror of hearts: "There is no human work," he used to say, "that to be truly great, it needs a little bit of love. He preferred to "show his strength to avoid using it", to convince before demanding. He mastered the most varied situations with finesse, with wisdom, with passion, but also without weakness, with a leitmotif: "The goal, always the goal".

Among his many portraits, all too often hagiographical, that of Wladimir d'Ormesson is striking: "In him were united gifts and qualities that rarely coexist: an iron energy and an almost feline suppleness, willpower and finesse, decision and prudence, a taste for risk and a sense of precaution, the leap of the leader and the political instinct. He had insights of genius. He did not need to know; he had a feeling. »

This man from Lorraine was born on November 17, 1854 in Nancy, where 80 years later he was given a state funeral. His existence is strewn with milestones that draw our attention to the events that influenced its course.

- First milestone His career path: a serious accident.

His fall at 18 months will have a significant impact on his destiny. For a long time immobilized and forced to wear a steel corset until the age of 12, he could only go to school at the age of 10 with canes.

However, he entered the 6th grade at the imperial lycée in Nancy, because he had a studious youth at home during which he developed a taste for reading, the basis of a very broad general culture, as well as for reflection which nourishes action.

What is exemplary in his behaviour is a fierce will which will then dictate him the obligation to be everywhere the best to make up for the delay due to his accident.

"A will, a continuation, a continuity, a decision to break everything, that's how all great things are made".

Even more exemplary, he put this will at the service of an ideal: "The essential thing," he writes, "is to know what you want and where you're going. And I know that: to make social duty prevail over all my actions".

- Second milestone: first contact with Algeria.

After graduating from Saint-Cyr in 1875, then from the Staff College in 1877, the young lieutenant chose to travel around Algeria for six weeks for his end-of-training leave. This stay marked him forever. Amazed, he wanted to see everything, know everything, understand everything. From now on he would constantly dream of these "countries of light", as he said, whose culture fascinated him and where there was so much to do. It is a first experience of his hectic life of overseas actions that will take him to Indochina, Madagascar, twice to Algeria and then to Morocco.

- Third milestone: the "Social role of the officer", a founding text.

Back from Algeria, he knows the dull life of the garrisons and cannot quench his thirst for action. Preoccupied by social problems, from 1887 onwards he used his time as captain of the 14th chasseurs at Saint-Germain ^{en Laye} to put his innovative ideas into practice.

His squadron was soon reputed to be the model squadron of the French army. He created the first refectory, the first soldier's home with a library and courses for illiterate people. New relationships were established between the officers and the troop. The well-being of the soldiers, their training, their education were discussed. They were even made to participate in an elected advisory board, which was unprecedented.

It's a whole new thing. Requested by the Revue des Deux-Mondes, a text by Captain Lyautey was published in the issue of 15 March 1891 under the title "Du rôle social de l'officier dans le service universel". He gives his analysis, the fruit of his experience and his thought-provoking reflections. Proof of his high-mindedness, his remarks are also addressed to "all social leaders", as he defines the bases of a management with a human face as opposed to a dehumanized management generating stress, which he will confirm later: "There is only one way forward, that of social work, only one rule: to act in a spirit of justice and respect, the only one that liberates man". "The Social Role" is a founding text that has not aged a day.

- Fourth milestone: the meeting with Gallieni.

His 1894 posting to Tonkin (North Vietnam) was seen as a setback. Squadron leader, luck did not abandon him and allowed him to serve under Colonel Gallieni. At the school of this valuable officer, a man of the field who respected men and their customs and who constantly sought to "make life", Lyautey, promoted to lieutenant-colonel in 1897, discovered his colonial vocation. He wrote to his sister: "One does not govern against the Mandarin, but with the Mandarin".

Colonel Gallieni, once appointed governor general of Madagascar, calls Lyautey to his side. He entrusts him with the pacification and organization of the northwest and then the south of the island. His genius, served by his passion for colonial action and his ever-improving practice of "oil stain" to pacify, brought Lyautey exemplary success in human, security, social and economic terms. He wrote: "Our action has nothing in common with wars between nations". It is an organization that works, it is constructive, and wars are destructive; it creates life and not ruins. Pacification, made up of prudence and adaptation, must progress like an oil stain, a flexible mixture of politics, friendship and force, of military raids turning into economic growth".

- Fifth milestone: the man of the situation.

Returning to France in 1902, Colonel Lyautey was given command of the 14th hussars ^{Alençon}. It was a nine-month interlude. In September 1903, he was urgently sent to Algeria, where the situation required a man of his experience and temperament. He will forge the soul of a Head of State.

Promoted to the rank of general, he successively commanded the territory of Aïn Sefra, then the division of Oran, before being, moreover, appointed high commissioner for the Algerian-Moroccan borders. His initiatives, dictated by a concern for efficiency both in time and space, were not always appreciated in Paris.

In 1909 he married Inès de Bourgoing, widow of Colonel Fortoul, nine years his junior. When he was appointed commander of the 10th army ^{corps} in Rennes in 1910, he believed his colonial adventure was over. But it was there, in 1912, that he reached his appointment as France's resident commissioner general in Morocco, following the signing of the protectorate treaty on 30 March.

- Sixth milestone: his appointment in Morocco

And it is in Morocco that his creative genius will fully blossom. He stayed there for 13 years, repeating over and over again: "The more I live in Morocco, the more I am convinced of the greatness of this country" and again: "I want to make us love this people".

He worked wonders despite frequent disagreements with the French government, because he was uncompromising on respect for the protectorate treaty. With a vision of the future, he consolidated the authority of the Sultan, he laid the foundations of modern Morocco by respecting its historical, religious and cultural traditions with the avowed aim of bringing the Cherifian kingdom to independence under the best conditions.

That is why, in addition to setting up a modernized administration, it is undertaking to provide the country with the infrastructure necessary for its economic and social development. The first tarred roads and railways, ports, primary and vocational schools, colleges, clinics, hospitals, buildings for public services created, etc., were built. Morocco is under construction.

As a builder, it lays down very strict rules for the respect of Moroccan heritage and its conception of town planning is still in use today. The gigantic works undertaken in the port of Casablanca are criticised in France for their cost. But Lyautey is intuitive: "You can never see too much," he says, "when it comes to founding for centuries. After the discovery of phosphate, he imagined that its exploitation would be a source of wealth for Morocco, provided it could be exported.

In doing so, he fiercely wanted and knew how to make France love him, and he initiated bonds of friendship between our two countries strong enough to resist "political errors". Today, Morocco's largest high school, in Casablanca, has kept the name Lycée Lyautey, a symbol of the esteem in which the Marshal is held.

- Seventh milestone The war of 1914-18.

In the midst of the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War, it must be said that, until now, Lyautey has been rather forgotten. However, speaking of "Lyautey and the First World War" logically brings up two related subjects: "Lyautey and Europe" and "Lyautey and his visions of the post-war period".

As early as 1897, he spoke of the "fratricidal" war of 1870, "which - he said - had nipped in

the bud the united, logical, historical Europe that the long work of the centuries was preparing". He hoped that Europe would finally unite "to face the real dangers, those that will threaten it tomorrow in its economic life right down to its sources, to those who will threaten it in its civilization, in its cult of beauty and its sense of the ideal, whose origins are in Athens, Rome and Judea". And, on August 3, 1914, on learning of Germany's declaration of war, General Lyautey exploded in front of his officers: "They are mad, completely mad! A war between Europeans is a civil war! It's the most monumental nonsense the world has ever seen!"

He was then ordered to evacuate the interior of Morocco, to hold only a few ports and to send all the battalions of the African army to France (thirty-five battalions and all the mounted batteries). Lyautey immediately sent the 1st Moroccan^{division}, composed mainly of Zouaves and Algerian skirmishers. Then, in August, Morocco provided a brigade of "indigenous chasseurs" known as the "Moroccan Brigade".

If it sent its best troops to France, it could not bring itself to take the risk of seeing the results of the pacification achieved over the past two years wiped out. An uprising encouraged and helped by the Germans would inevitably follow. Lyautey therefore decided to organise himself so as not to abandon any of the positions he had acquired. It was a gamble that seemed foolish, but one that he would win. This is what made Guillaume de Tarde say: "His luck consisted in never risking the impossible".

He gets the compensatory top-up of "territorials" from France. He created and trained new units of the African army, proud to take over from those who had left for the front before leaving there themselves. He mobilizes the ardour, seduces, flatters, energizes by his presence and by his words; he gives the change. It sets up a psychological component thanks to showcases of optimism, such as the first great fair of Casablanca in 1915, which reinforces our prestige. He persuades of the reality of a "Moroccan front" linked to the European war since the Germans support the dissident tribes with agents, money and armament.

He himself bears the brunt of the Germans' revenge on Morocco, which has escaped their covetousness. They set fire to his castle at Crévic in Lorraine on August 22nd. Nothing could overwhelm him so much, but he knows how to bounce back and valorize all his acts by practicing psychological action and the art of communication.

Called up as Minister of War at the end of 1916, he preferred to resign after a few months rather than deal with politicians who refused to take the decisions dictated by the situation. He remained bitter at not having been able to set up a single allied command, a guarantee of efficiency - Clemenceau would take credit for this - or to prevent General Nivelle's offensive, the dramatic failure of which he had foreseen.

On his return to Morocco, he continued his work as a builder while taking part, with logistics at the highest level, in the war effort against Germany. He did not stop sending food, livestock, raw materials and reinforcements to France. He created and trained Moroccan units - skirmishers, spahis, goumiers - who, once they had been trained, left in their turn for the front where metropolitan, Blackfoot and Moroccan troops would combine their sweat and blood to defend France. There, the African army acquires its letters of nobility, paid for at great cost.

- Eighth milestone: the bad end of the war in 1918.

After the victory over Germany and the armistice of 11 November 1918, Lyautey shared the general joy. However, his political sense and intuition prevented him from being

euphoric like many, as he foresaw the tragedies to come with a rare clairvoyance. Even before the armistice, he had let his mistrust of the terms of the future peace treaty become apparent. Thus, on November 17, 1918, he wrote to his sister: "If I exult in the triumphant military success, it is not the same for the political horizon. I do not augur well for this flowering of socialist republics and I fear that the super-Balkans that will be settling in Central Europe will be a formidable cause of fire'.

He is closely following the work of the negotiators of the Treaty of Versailles. His knowledge of the dossiers would have made him a first-rate adviser. He even made proposals that contained the seeds of Europe. They will not be taken into account any more than his request to involve Morocco in the negotiations, which was very clear-sighted. He thus affirmed his will to lead the kingdom on the road to sovereignty.

As a visionary, his perception of the weaknesses of the Treaty of Versailles and of the more or less long-term consequences of the First World War is not unrelated to his positions and his reactions.

On November 18, 1920, he made a date on the evolution of the world and the future of colonization by addressing the government and its civilian and military subordinates with the famous note known as the "coup de barre". In this text, which has become historic, he takes into account the idea of the right of peoples to self-determination. Claiming: "It is urgent to shout casse-cou", it is based on respect for the spirit and the letter of the status of protectorate in Morocco to denounce the abuses to be fought and propose remedies.

Concerned about the good relations to be established with the Maghreb, he pleaded as early as 1922 for a Franco-Muslim federation of Mediterranean countries between Gibraltar and the Bosphorus.

On 19 October 1922, invited to lay the foundation stone of the sanctuary of the Paris mosque, he made a speech whose content should inspire all those who give lessons: "...France, liberal, orderly, hard-working, Islam renewed and rejuvenated, appear to me as two forces, two great and noble forces whose union, pursuing neither violence, nor destruction, nor domination, but order, respect for their claims, the respect of their claims, the respect of their rights..." their legitimate claims, the integrity of their national territories, tolerance for all beliefs and convictions, must be a preponderant factor for the peace of the world". Is France liberal in the sense of tolerant, orderly, hard-working? Is Islam renewed and rejuvenated? That, it seems, is the equation to be solved.

At the time of the Rif War, we know the humiliating conditions under which the left-wing cartel ousted Lyautey, forcing him to resign in 1925 after refusing him the reinforcements that were indispensable to save Morocco and his work for the future of this country. Back in France, he divided his time between Paris and Thorey where he died on 27 July 1934.

Like so many men leaving the responsibilities, he could have withdrawn into himself and cultivated in his heart some justified bitterness. No, none of that: he remained on the breach. In his eyes, the only thing that matters to him is the future, contact with the young people who are the hope of the future, and service to the country.

- Ninth milestone: the International Colonial Exhibition of 1931.

His last great work was the organization of the 1931 International Colonial Exhibition. With more than 33 million visitors in six months, he made it a huge success to the glory of

France. This last milestone was both a high point for Lyautey and the sending of a message to those who had to defend and transmit the values he stood for.

On the occasion of this exhibition, this promoter of friendship between peoples proclaimed: "Union between races, those races that really should not be hierarchised into superior races, but should be seen as 'different' by learning to adapt to what makes them different". In this he contrasts with Jules Ferry, who openly asserted that 'the superior races have a right over the inferior races'.

By putting into perspective all these milestones of an existence that have become milestones of History and that can be, on many occasions, a source of inspiration for the present, it should be stressed that Hubert Lyautey, in spite of the fact that he was the only one to have been born in the United States, was a man of the world. tensions and oppositions, he did not seek to divide in order to impose himself, but constantly sought, as he put it, "the denominator that unites men" in an atmosphere of respect, of all respect.

It is in this too that he is exemplary and that he can still serve France.

Colonel (er) Pierre GEOFFROY carried out between 1953 and 1962 several campaigns in Indochina and Algeria, in particular as an officer of Algerian Affairs. After various staff assignments, he retired in 1981. He then began a second career by creating a consulting firm, and was also very involved in the associative world. However, he has always devoted his energies to Marshal Lyautey. Founding President of the Association Nationale Maréchal Lyautey in 1980, he also presides over the eponymous Foundation. Finally, he held important responsibilities within the commune of Thorey-Lyautey.

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