

**THE GREAT WARS IN EUROPE
AND THE GENERALS DESTINIES: SOME REMARKS****Yu. A. Pavlov****Far Eastern State University of Humanities, Khabarovsk, Russia**

Summary. In this article I would like to accomplish the following: (a) to compare the life span of generals and admirals in four European countries and three periods: the Napoleonic wars (1795–1815), World War I (1914–1918) and World War II (1939–1945); (b) to examine the maximum life span of military commanders by country and by period; (c) to identify the number of young commanding officers (under 40) by country and by period. Technological progress of the war and the creation of ever more lethal weapons did not have a decisive impact on the life span of generals and admirals. High mortality in the war could not stop the social and medical progress. Life span of military commanders increased from generation to generation. Generals and admirals who survived military events could live to a great age. Some lived more than 100 years.

Keywords: life span; mortality rate; the generals; the admirals; the Napoleonic wars (1795–1815); the World War I (1914–1918) and the World War II (1939–1945).

Introduction

In 2014 the public will commemorate 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, one of the most large-scale and bloody wars in the history of mankind. This is a good reason for this study. My intention is to carry out a comparative analysis of life span of military commanders in four countries of Europe (France, Germany, Great Britain and Russia) for the last 150 years starting from the Napoleonic era and finishing with World War II. How dangerous is the military profession in modern societies? What is the risk of dying in action? Can a young man who has chosen for himself the military occupation expect to be honoured and respected in old age? Or is it a privilege of civilians only? How long did Napoleon Bonaparte and Horatio Nelson, Alexei Brusilov and Erich Ludendorff, Charles de Gaulle and Heinz Guderian live? How much longer did thousands of other lesser-known generals and admirals of the same periods live? How many years on average did a typical commander of the Napoleonic era, World War I or World War II live? Were there any generals and admirals in Europe who lived to a great old age? Those who reached 90 years, 100 years? This article is intended to provide answers to these and some other questions.

Each activity affects the behavior and character of a person. The military profession is no different from that. Karl von Clausewitz, famous military theorist of the Napoleonic era, wrote that war is an extreme degree of violence. It is always a clash of wills, temperaments and characters [4, p. 23, 27, 77]. War absorbs all the attention of its participants. It is always a psychological and physical discomfort. War requires constant readiness and great exertion. Generals and admirals (as well as soldiers) must be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. War is always the area of danger. War is a zero-sum game: if one wins, the other necessarily loses. Each battle can be not only the end of a successful career, but also the last day of the life of a military commander. Thus, war requires courageous, persistent and enduring leaders able to organize and supervise others, make quick but effective decisions under risk and uncertainty. A commander must be able to dominate the event, to take responsibility for lives of thousands of soldiers and officers. He must be able to control violence promptly, persistently and effectively [8, p. 106].

The period of 1795 to 1945 was a time of increasing industrialization of war [14; 30; 31]. The scale of war and its methods changed over a century and a half. The Industrial Revolution of the late 18th – early 19th century contributed to the development of military theory and military professionalism. First it was the bayonet flintlock rifles, smoothbore artillery, sailing fleet, beautiful and elegant attacks in parade-style close order of the Napoleonic era. Then it was the time of dreadnoughts, machine guns, dirigibles, first tanks and airplanes, and positional trench warfare. During World War II, weapons became more lethal: sub-machine guns, machine guns, tanks, planes, missiles, submarines, and finally atomic weapons. Information-propaganda war as well as special operations became large-scale. Victory was forged not only on the front line, but also in the rear by efforts of secret-service agents and saboteurs. War became an all-out war when battles

were fought on land, in the sky and the deep sea. It was a great transformation which had also affected lives of generals and admirals.

Data

Both, published materials [3; 5; 10; 13; 15; 16; 19; 20; 22; 25-28; 32-35; 37-42] and databases [6; 18; 21; 23; 24] were used to determine the life span of generals and admirals. I have collected information on participants of the Napoleonic Wars, World War I and World War II who were in the rank of a major-general (rear admiral) to a field marshal (admiral-general) as well as a brigadier general for the countries of Europe whose armies had that rank. As Table 1 shows, it is more than 12 thousand people, with almost half of them belonging to the period of World War II. There is an explanation to this fact. First, the closer to the present time, the better the data are preserved. Second, the total character of modern warfare (militarization of many aspects of life, militarization of the bureaucracy, development of the military-industrial complex, etc.) led to an increase in the number of generals and admirals.

Table 1

Number of generals and admirals in our database

Period	France	Germany	Great Britain	Russia	Total
Napoleonic Wars (1795–1815)	569	782	375	706	2432
World War I (1914–1918)	398	2474	310	679	3861
World War II (1939–1945)	1185	1118	2438	1498	6239
Total	2152	4374	3123	2883	12532

Results

Let me start with the analysis of life span of generals and admirals of the Napoleonic period. The Napoleonic period was a time of never-ending 20-year wars across Europe and beyond. During this period, some 12 million people were mobilized in the belligerent countries. At that time, France was fighting virtually the whole of Europe therefore its losses were so horrendous. Perhaps, behavior of military commanders of France was the most heroic and sacrificial among other European countries. This fact was highlighted in 1916 by G. Bodart [2, p. 125]. Let's analyze the life span of generals and admirals in Europe over the period as a whole (Table 2).

Table 2

Mortality rate of military commanders of Europe, participants
of the Napoleonic Wars (in percent)

Age (years)	France	Germany (Prussia)	Great Britain	Russia
20–29	0,9	none	none	1,0
30–39	7,9	none	1,9	2,8
40–49	14,6	1,3	8,5	10,1
50–59	16,2	8,3	9,9	21,5
60–69	20,0	29,9	21,9	27,9
70–79	22,8	40,9	32,5	23,4
80–89	14,4	18,2	21,6	12,5
90–99	3,2	1,4	3,7	0,8
Total	100	100	100	100

The generals and admirals of the Napoleonic Wars were of several generations: François Kellerman «the Elder» (1735–1820), Louis-Alexander Berthier (1753–1815), Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), and Phillip Ségur (1780–1873) from France. Charles William Brunswick (1735–1806), Gebhard Lebrecht von Blücher (1742–1819), Friedrich Wilhelm von Bülow (1755–1816), and Karl von Zieten (1770–1848) from Prussia. Ralf Abercromby (1734–1801), Horatio Nelson (1758–1805), Arthur Wellington (1769–1852),

and Frederick Adam (1784–1853) from Great Britain. Alexander Suvorov (1730–1800), Levin Bennigsen (1745–1826), Peter Konovnitsyn (1764–1822), and Alexander Kutaysov (1784–1812) from Russia.

It is clear that France had the highest percentage of generals and admirals who died before the age of 40 (8,8 percent). This was significantly more than in Russia (3,8 percent) and Great Britain (1,9 percent), and there were none in Prussia. Such a large number of generals and admirals under the age of 40 was due to several factors. First, France was at war with all of Europe. Second, the officer corps was transformed as a result of the French bourgeois revolution. It was a time when the idea of meritocracy appeared, and young talented people from all social classes got promoted. Scholars have long noted that social mobility is always higher in times of revolutionary upheavals. Therefore, rapid promotion through the ranks became a distinguishing feature of the French military [1]. However, this new generation of commanders, even in the general's uniform, continued to have the psychology of subaltern officers, as they were until recently. They were ambitious, courageous, and eager to fight and sacrifice themselves, wanting to excel and get rewards. Many of them were killed in action as Barthélemy Joubert (1769–1799) or Auguste Caulaincourt (1777–1812). In Russia, most of the young officers were killed on battlefields of the Patriotic War of 1812 and foreign campaigns of 1813–1815. These young generals were descendants of noble families and belonged to the same generation as the Russian Emperor Alexander I (1777–1825), as Alexander Tuchkov (1777–1812) and Sergey Ushakov (1776–1814). In Great Britain, young generals were killed in campaigns in Portugal and Spain 1808–1814, as George Drummond (1776–1811) and Richard Collins (1775–1813).

Generals of other opponents of France, for example, Austria and Prussia, especially in the initial period, were much older. Those were mature commanders. They were more cautious, pragmatic and conservative. They did not want to lose what they had. 60–70-year old generals of Austria and Prussia («grandfathers») could not keep up with young and energetic «grandchildren» of France. They preferred to hang out the white flag and surrender. «Rather die than surrender» was the motto of France. «Surrender to survive» was the motto of Austria and Prussia. In the countries which were not influenced by social changes of the French bourgeois revolution, advancing through the ranks was more consistent and slow [see for example: 9; 36]. This was the legacy of the 18th century with its old principles and approaches to the officers' careers and methods of warfare. France first opened a new chapter in the modern warfare, so that the secret of her initial success was in it.

The issue of age of military commanders, participants of the Napoleonic Wars, is contradictory. The four countries have little in common. In the age group of 40–49, the difference between the smallest value (Prussia) and the largest value (France) exceeds 11 times. In other words, for each surviving general of France there were 11 generals of Prussia. Closer values are found only in age groups of 60–69 and 80–89 years. Table 2 shows that the war differently affected the same social groups in different societies. In this sense, the situation with France is unique: at such a high mortality rate of generals and admirals at a young age, the country succeeded in maintaining the percentage of those who lived to their 90s. French authors G. Six and J. Houdaille pointed to this fact. Both of these authors noted several cases of exclusive longevity of French commanders who avoided violent deaths and deaths from epidemics. Following the resignation these generals and admirals left for their vacation homes in the countryside, in the open air, with good food and pension, and lived to a great old age [11; 19]

Let us look at the length of life of commanding officers of World War I. This war spanned only 4 years, but its generals and admirals were of several generations: Joseph Galliéni (1849–1916), Maurice Sarrail (1856–1929), Edmond Buat (1868–1923) from France; Ludwig von Falkenhausen (1844–1936), Maximilian von Spee (1861–1914), Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck (1870–1964) from Germany; John Arbuthnot Fisher (1841–1920), Ian Hamilton (1853–1947), William Robertson (1860–1933), David Beatty (1871–1936) from Great Britain; Illarion Vorontsov-Dashkov (1837–1916), Yakov Zhilinsky (1853–1918), Alexander Kolchak (1874–1920) from Russia.

Table 3 shows that the category of generals and admirals at the age of 20–29 disappeared, and at the same time there appeared examples of exceptional longevity (100 years and over). In the 19th century, military service was institutionalized. The army and navy became large bureaucratic organizations. A strong service hierarchy lined up. The or-

der of promotion in rank was strictly regulated, especially in peacetime. The number of vacancies for general and admiral posts was limited. There was a close relationship between the age and rank of an officer. Under this system, we can see 20-year-old lieutenants, 30-year-old captains, 40-year-old colonels and 50-year-old generals. There might be exceptions, but in general, in Europe there was just such a trend. The age of army commanders in time of peace was always higher than in wartime, although the period 1815–1914 can hardly be called peaceful, therefore the number of generals and admirals who died at the age of 40 was so small (in France and Germany, there were no such cases). In general, more than a half of army officers in France, Great Britain and Russia or about two-thirds in Germany lived long enough to retire (aged 60–79). Every second general (admiral) in France, every third general (admiral) in Germany and Britain, and every fifth general (admiral) in Russia lived to a very old age (80–99 years).

Table 3

Mortality rate of military commanders of Europe,
participants of the World War I (percent)

Age	France	Germany	Great Britain	Russia
30–39	none	none	0,3	0,1
40–49	0,5	none	3,2	5,6
50–59	1,8	4,6	7,7	18,8
60–69	17,8	23,3	21,6	30,3
70–79	34,7	40,1	32,3	26,6
80–89	29,6	28,5	25,2	14,3
90–99	15,1	3,4	9,4	4,3
100 and over	0,5	0,1	0,3	none
Total	100	100	100	100

Look at the duration of life of commanding officers of World War II. By its scale, this war is considered the most bloody and destructive in human history. More than 30 million men were mobilized by all countries and thrown into the fire of battle. Generals and admirals of different generations participated in World War II: Maurice Gamelin (1872–1958), Charles de Gaulle (1890–1970), Phillippe Leclerc (1902–1947) from France. Gerd von Rundstedt (1875–1953), Ervin Rommel (1891–1944), Theodor Tolsdorff (1909–1978) from Germany. Archibald Wavell (1883–1950), Harold Alexander (1891–1969), Charles Wingate (1903–1944) from Great Britain. Kliment Voroshilov (1881–1969), Georgi Zhukov (1896–1974), Pavel Batitzky (1910–1984) from Russia (USSR). Lifespan of generals and admirals of the four countries involved in the war are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Mortality rate of military commanders of Europe, participants
of the World War II (percent)

Age	France	Germany	Great Britain	Russia (USSR)
30–39	none	0,8	0,3	1,9
40–49	0,5	6,0	2,7	13,4
50–59	4,9	16,8	6,1	14,7
60–69	17,6	18,4	15,4	21,4
70–79	29,7	25,8	30,8	26,5
80–89	33,2	23,3	33,0	18,1
90–99	13,2	8,7	11,4	3,9
100 and over	0,9	0,2	0,3	0,1
Total	100	100	100	100

The Soviet Union had the highest percentage of deaths among young generals. This was due to the repression in the Red Army in 1937–1941. Human life was of little concern to Joseph Stalin. On the one hand, the Soviet Union advanced the slogan «Cadres

decide everything!», on the other, «No one is irreplaceable!» Favourites were continuously replaced one after another. The lack of military training and experience these officers compensated with enthusiasm and courage. They learned the art of war right on the battlefield. Many of them died in the Soviet-Finnish War and the Great Patriotic War. Some of Stalin's young favorites were executed for poor readiness of Air Forces to engage in aerial combat operations, such as Yakov Smushkevich (1902–1941) and Pavel Rychagov (1911–1941). They became the «whipping boys». In Germany, young generals were killed and committed suicide in the last days of the Third Reich in the spring of 1945, as Helmuth Hufenbach (1908–1945) and Erich Bärenfänger (1915–1945). In Great Britain, it was brigadier generals; several of them died soon after the war as Collingwood Ravenhill (1910–1947) and Jack Cargill (1910–1948).

A large difference among countries is observed in the age group of 40–49 years. In France, only half a percent died at this age; in the USSR – 13,4 percent which is 27 times greater, i. e. every seventh general (admiral) did not live up to 50 years. Germany has also lost a lot of military commanders of this age, especially on the Eastern Front. In the age group of 50–59 there was a similar trend. The Soviet Union and Germany's losses of military officers of this age group were 2,5–3 times higher than those of France and Great Britain. A quarter of German and Soviet generals did not live up to 60 years.

In the category of 60–69 and 70–79 years, countries are approximately equal. From the age of 80–89, Germany and the Soviet Union started gradually losing ground as the result of the loss of young officers. At Nuremberg, Germany was declared the initiator of World War II. Some German generals and admirals who survived in battles were then executed as war criminals. Others served sentences in prison which undermined their health. But some lived a long life as, for example, Admiral Karl Dönitz (1891–1980) and General Paul Hausser (1880–1972), one of the founders of Waffen SS. The four countries had 100-year-old military commanders, for example, Kurt Andersen (1898–2003) in Germany, Ernest Ransford (1897–2002) in Great Britain, André Marteau (1889–1994) in France, and Ivan Bulychev (1897–1999) in the USSR.

This is evidence of improving health care and social protection of war veterans as well as a good pension system in the second half of the 20th century. Participants of World War II were taken care of and respected by European governments. In addition, one can not underestimate social factors (place of residence of a veteran, his marital status, living conditions, smoking habits, alcohol consumption), and of course a genetic factor (robust health). All this affected the life span of generals and admirals.

Let us draw some conclusions for the century and a half. The highest mortality rate of young generals was during the Napoleonic wars. For them it was a severe test, a real «meat grinder». Later on, the death rate declined steadily. Even the nearly 2 percent of the Soviet generals, who died a violent death, cannot be compared with horrors of close combat of the Napoleonic Wars. There was almost a fivefold reduction in total mortality among young commanding officers in Europe for a century and a half (from 14,5 percent to 3 percent).

Table 5

Generals and admirals died before 40 years of age in Europe, 1795–1945 (percent)

Period	France	Germany	Great Britain	Russia
1795–1815	8,8	none	1,9	3,8
1914–1918	none	none	0,3	0,1
1939–1945	none	0,8	0,3	1,9

Note: compiled from Tables 2–4.

Let us identify the main trends in the duration of life of military commanders in Europe for the century and a half. There are three most common ways to determine the central tendency: median, mean and mode. With a symmetrical distribution of a set of numbers, all three values of the central tendency coincide. Values can be different with an offset distribution of a set of numbers (see Tables 6–8). In our case, the mean and the median approximately coincide. Life span of generals (admirals) increased in all countries for the century and a half. However, the progress was not everywhere the same. We

see a decline in life span during World War II in all countries but Great Britain (Table 6). However, the median shows the reduction of lifetime in Germany alone (Table 7). That is why we need to employ several methods.

Table 6

Average life span of generals and admirals of Europe in 1795–1945 (years)

Period	France	Germany	Great Britain	Russia
1795–1815	64,6	71,5	70,3	64,0
1914–1918	78,5	74,6	73,9	68,0
1939–1945	77,9	71,3	76,5	67,2

Table 7

The median life span of generals and admirals of Europe in 1795–1945 (years)

Period	France	Germany	Great Britain	Russia
1795–1815	66	72	72	65
1914–1918	78	75	75	68
1939–1945	79	73	78	69

Of interest is the modal value. We can see the largest range of values in France where most commanding officers died at the age of 59 under Napoleon, at the age of 77 during World War I and at the age of 87 during World War II. In Russia, the worst period was 1914–1918. Generals, who participated in World War I, then became victims of the civil war fighting on the side of the White movement or on that of the Bolsheviks. Many emigrated and lingered out their lives. A downward mobility and lower living standards were typical of them (generals and admirals had to engage in physical labour to provide for themselves and their families). Poor diet, poor housing, low income, and depression sometimes caused suicides [see for example: 12]. Commanding officers, who stayed in the Soviet Union fell a victim to the regime. In the 1930s, the Stalinist leadership accused them of counter-revolution and turned repression upon them. Even in Germany that lost the war, the situation was more favorable under the Weimar Republic, not to mention Great Britain where the nation enjoyed the fruits of victory and praised their heroes.

Table 8

The modal length of life of generals and admirals in Europe, 1795–1945 (years)

Period	France	Germany	Great Britain	Russia
1795–1815	59	73	77	71
1914–1918	77	74	77	66
1939–1945	87	76	80	71

And now, let us analyze changes in the number of long-living commanding officers in Europe. In general, for the century and a half there was a steady increase in the number of generals and admirals who lived up to 90 years and over. A slight decrease is reported in France and Russia. However, for the century and a half the progress is impressive: a four-fold increase in France, six-fold in Germany, three-fold in Great Britain, and a five-fold increase in Russia. This is despite the fact that it is a dangerous military profession.

Table 9

Generals and admirals in Europe died at an age of 90 and over, 1795–1945 (percent)

Period	France	Germany	Great Britain	Russia
1795–1815	3,2	1,4	3,7	0,8
1914–1918	15,6	3,5	9,7	4,3
1939–1945	14,1	8,9	11,7	4,0

Karl von Clausewitz, a member of the Napoleonic Wars (finished it in the rank of colonel), noted that during the war the higher the position of the commander, the lower the risk. For the commander-in-chief, it equaled to zero [4, p. 84]. Of course, Clausewitz was right, but history knows many examples of death of senior officers. French Admiral François Bruyes (1753–1798) was killed in the Battle of Aboukir. British Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758–1805) was mortally wounded in the Battle of Trafalgar. British General Ralph Abercromby (1734–1801) died of wounds in Egypt. Prussian Field Marshal Carl Brunswick (1735–1806), was mortally wounded at the Battle of Auerstädt. French Marshal Jean Lannes (1769–1809) was mortally wounded at the Battle of Aspern. British General John Moore (1761–1809) died of wounds in Spain. Russian General Peter Bagration (1769–1812) died of wounds shortly after the Battle of Borodino. General Gerhard Scharnhorst (1755–1813), chief of staff of the Prussian Army, died of wounds in the battle of Lützen.

German Admirals Maximilian von Spee (1861–1914) and Günther Lütjens (1889–1941) drowned during world wars. The same fate befell Field Marshal Horatio Kitchener (1850–1916), Great Britain Secretary War. He was on board a ship which hit a mine and sank. William Gott (1897–1942), English General, was killed in a plane crash in North Africa hardly he had become the commander of the 8th Army. Soviet Generals who were in command of the fronts, Mikhail Kirponos (1892–1941), Nikolai Vatutin (1901–1944) and Ivan Chernyakhovsky (1906–1945) were fatally wounded. General Gaston Billotte (1875–1940), who commanded the 1st Army Group in the Battle of France, died in a car crash. Feodor von Bock (1880–1945), German Field Marshal, was killed during the air attack. In May 1945, the car, which drove him, his wife and daughter, was attacked by British fighters, and the passengers were shot dead. Life of the Russian General, Alexander Samsonov (1854–1914), was tragically cut short at the very beginning of World War I. In August 1914, he commanded the 2nd Army in East Prussia, where he was surrounded. General Samsonov committed suicide, not wishing to be captured. Similar was the fate of Walther Model, German Field Marshal (1891–1945). In April 1945, after the defeat on the Western Front, fearing capture, he killed himself.

Diseases like battles killed military commanders. Eustache Bruix (1759–1805), French Admiral, died of tuberculosis. Frederick Stanley Maude (1864–1917), British General, who commanded the British Forces in Mesopotamia, died of cholera after drinking raw milk. Russian General Nikolai Ivanov (1851–1919), who commanded the front in World War I, died of typhus. In 1831, many veterans of the Napoleonic wars died when the cholera epidemic was raging in Europe: Vasily Kostenetsky (1769–1831), Ivan Dibich (1785–1831), Louis Alexander Langeron (1763–1831), August von Gneisenau (1760–1831), and Karl von Clausewitz (1780–1831).

War does not end with the last shot. Its effects continue for a long time. In this respect, the fate of Kuzma Derevianko (1904–1954), Soviet General, is a clear example. Sept. 2, 1945 on behalf of the Soviet Union he signed the Act of Japan's surrender and the end of World War II. After that he developed health problems due to the radioactive exposure during his visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He died of cancer in December 1954. It is ironic that the man put an end to the war, died from its effects.

There were commanders who died in time of peace after having gone through the hardships of war. Russian General Mikhail Miloradovich (1771–1825), when urging the rebel officers (Decembrists) to return to their barracks was mortally wounded by one of them. Two centuries later, Henry Hughes Wilson (1864–1922), British Field Marshal, was assassinated in Ireland. Some generals, such as Horace Smith-Dorrien (1858–1930), Feodor Abramov (1870–1963) and Walther Wenck (1900–1982), died in car accidents. In 1964, the USSR delegation of World War II veterans among whom there were Marshal Sergei Biriuzov (1904–1964), Generals Ivan Kravtsov (1896–1964) and Vladimir Zhdanov (1902–1964) on the way to Yugoslavia died in a plane crash near Belgrade.

Marshals Joachim Murat (1767–1815) and Michel Ney (1769–1815) were executed by the Bourbons for their loyalty to Napoleon Bonaparte. Field Marshal Erwin Witzleben (1881–1944) and Admiral Friedrich Wilhelm Canaris (1887–1945) were executed for conspiring against Adolf Hitler. Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel (1882–1946) and General Alfred Jodl (1890–1946) were, on the contrary, executed after the war for their loyalty

to the Third Reich. Commanders-collaborators who assisted the Nazis, such as Henri Philippe Pétain (1856–1951), head of the Vichy government, or Andrei Vlasov (1901–1946), Head of the Russian Liberation Army, were punished too. Both were accused of treason and sentenced to death. Thanks to his advanced age and merits during World War I, the death penalty for Pétain was commuted to life imprisonment.

All these examples show the impact of war and other events on life span of generals and admirals. Not only battles but other factors as well reduced life chances of military commanders. How long could Horace Smith-Dorrien or Walther Wenck have lived, if it had not been for the car accident? How long would Wilhelm Keitel and Alfred Jodl have lived, if they had not been executed? How long would Karl von Clausewitz have lived, if he had not died of the disease? How much more could he have done in the area of basic research? Could Henri Pétain have lived to be 100 years old if he had not spent the last five years of his life in prison? Although history has no subjunctive mood, we can assume that all these people would have lived longer.

Conclusion

The whole history of mankind is closely connected with wars. No matter how long people live, their life has always been accompanied by wars. War is an integral part of our lives. Every war is a social selection. It is always an accident, always a probability theory. The paradox is that wars create talents which they often take away. Wars do not go unnoticed. They kill many and injure others. Injuries, concussion and diseases of war then turned into chronic diseases in peacetime. Medics estimated that by psychological and physical stress one day of war was equal to a week of peace, therefore people who made a military occupation their profession were in the high-risk group. In this article, I examined life of generals and admirals in four European countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, and Russia) for the century and a half. Under review were three major periods: the Napoleonic Wars, World War I and World War II, and lives of twelve and a half thousand military commanders. Technological progress of war and creation of ever more lethal weapons were not the deciding factor as for the lifetime of generals and admirals. High mortality in the war could not stop social and medical progress. Life span of generals and admirals was increasing from generation to generation. Generals and admirals, who participated in combat actions, could live to a great age, and some of them lived even longer. Military commanders, survivors of the war, lived as a rule longer than civilians. This is another paradox, which requires further research. How will the Armed Forces of Europe change in the 21st century? How will fighting wars change in the 21st century? What will be the life span of generals and admirals in the 21st century? Only time will tell.

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