**The Role of Douglas Haig and Ferdinand Foch**

**Source B: Douglas Haig’s final dispatch to his troops, 21 March 1919**

In every stage of the wearing-out struggle losses will necessarily be heavy on both sides, for in it the price of victory is paid. If the opposing forces are approximately equal in numbers, in courage, in moral and in equipment, there is no way of avoiding payment of the price or of eliminating this phase of the struggle.

In former battles this stage of the conflict has rarely lasted more than a few days, and has often been completed in a few hours. When armies of millions are engaged, with the resources of great Empires behind them, it will inevitably be long. It will include violent crises of fighting which, when viewed separately and apart from the general perspective, will appear individually as great indecisive battles. To this stage belong the great engagements of 1916 and 1917 which wore down the strength of the German Armies.

Finally, whether from the superior fighting ability and leadership of one of the belligerents, as the result of greater resources or tenacity, or by reason of higher moral, or from a combination of all these causes, the time will come when the other side will begin to weaken and the climax of the battle is reached.

Then the commander of the weaker side must choose whether he will break off the engagement, if he can, while there is yet time, or stake on a supreme effort what reserves remain to him... In this World War the great sortie of the beleaguered German Armies, commenced on March 21, 1918, lasted for four months, yet it represents a corresponding stage in a single colossal battle.

The breaking down of such a supreme effort will be the signal for the commander of the successful side to develop his greatest strength, and seek to turn to immediate account the loss in material and moral which their failure must inevitably produce among his opponent’s troops.

In a battle joined and decided in the course of a few days or hours, there is no risk that the lay observer will seek to distinguish the culminating operations by which victory is seized and exploited from the preceding stages by which it has been made possible and determined. If the whole operations of the present war are regarded in correct perspective, the victories of the summer and autumn of 1918 will be seen to be directly dependent upon the two years of stubborn fighting that preceded them.

**Source C: Quoted in Elizabeth Greenhalgh, *Foch in Command*, 2011**

On 7 August 1918 the President of the French Republic raised General Ferdinand Foch to the dignity of Marshal of France. Foch had reached the pinnacle of his military career. Less than five months earlier, on 26 March 1918, he had been chosen by unanimous consent of the British and French military and political leaders to be Generalissimo of the Allied armies on the Western Front. To undertake the terrible responsibility thrust on him Foch would be required to draw on all he had learned as a soldier in the prewar period and to reflect on his performance as a commander since August 1914.

At the top of the pyramid a commander’s role is to make things happen. Foch’s strategic vision made things happen in 1918. He made Haig and Pétain keep contact in March, and never abandoned the principle that British and French forces should maintain an unbroken front. He made the crucial decision that began the counter-offensives in July. He insisted on always having a strategic reserve, by demanding that Allied governments provide the men, by doling them out parsimoniously when required, and by watching the enemy’s reserves very closely. His strategic vision recognised the importance of communications and ensured that the Allies’ first task was to free their own before proceeding to converge on the squeeze point of the German communications

‘Douglas Haig and Ferdinand Foch were the main reason for the Allied victory in the First World War’

How far do you agree with this statement?

Explain your answer.