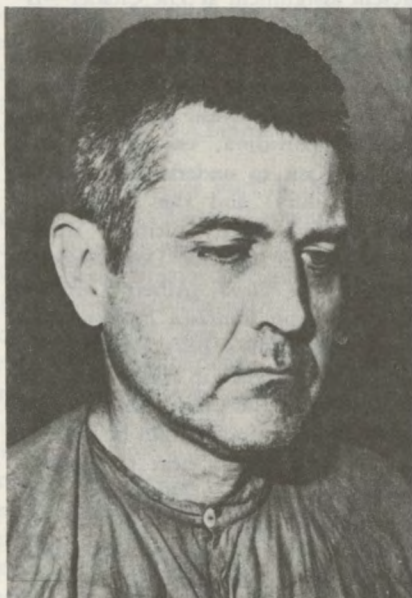


# Moral Leadership

Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale,  
U. S. Navy (Retired)



*"The extortion system, powered by our enemy's willingness to torture and impose isolation, quickly drove to the surface issues of moral integrity which at the pace of normal life could take years to fester and erupt into public view."*

Extortion, the squeeze-play drawing out of victims by force or compulsion is dramatized in Godfather movies as an easily recognized, explicit, usually illegal way of conducting business. In reality, though, it is conducted much more frequently in subtler ways—ways which are both more difficult to recognize and more difficult to deal with. And by no means are these ways illegal, at least not in the sense that I use the word. We frequently face extortionary pressures in our everyday life, for extortion is just a concentrated form of manipulation through the use of fear and guilt. We who are in hierarchies—be they academic, business, military, or some other sort—are always in positions in which people are trying to manipulate us, to get moral leverage on us. It is the wise leader who comes to the conclusion that he can't be had if he can't be made to feel guilty. That is as true today in a free environment as it was for me during my years in prison camp. You have got to keep yourself clean—never do or say anything of which you can be made to be ashamed—in order to avoid being manipulated. A smart man, an ethical man, never gives a manipulator an even break. He is always prepared to quench the extortionist's artful insinuation of guilt with the icewater of a truthful, clear-conscienced put-down. The more benign the environment, the more insidious is the extortionist's style. "Then Arthur learned," says the legend, "as all leaders are astonished to learn, that peace, not war, is the destroyer of men; that tranquility, rather than danger, is the mother of cowardice; and that not need, but plenty, brings apprehension and unease."

This is not to suggest that there is only one way to lead, one manner of leadership, one style that best fits all circumstances. Of course not. I have merely said that all styles must be built on moral virtue. On specific leadership styles, I learned much from a talk by a psychoanalyst named Michael Maccoby. With a comprehensive understanding of American history, and after in-depth interviews of more than 200 American leaders of the 1970s, Maccoby concluded that

there were four dominant leadership styles in the American past.

Now there are two things to remember as I quickly go over this analysis of Maccoby's. First of all, examples of men who embody each style have always been around and are still around; it's just that the challenges of different historic periods seemed to draw out particular types of leaders. And second, don't look for progress in leadership styles as we walk through this analysis. The leaders as leaders or as men don't get better as we follow the historic process.

From the Declaration of Independence until the credit system started to grow in the 1870s after the Civil War, most American leaders fell into a category he calls "craftsmen." They were "do-it-yourself" guys: self-reliant, strong-willed, cautious, suspicious, harder on themselves than they are on others. Benjamin Franklin was cited as their prototype then, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn now. Their target of competition was not other men, but rather their idea of their own potential. Craftsmen climbed ladders not to get ahead of others, but to achieve that level of excellence they believed they had within themselves. They are mountain climbers, not players of what systems analysts call "zero-sum-games." They liked to make up their own minds; they did not buy school solutions. Craftsmen were men of conscience.

The industrial revolution and the need of its necessary credit and banking base were met by a new breed of leaders: Maccoby called them the "jungle fighters." Jungle fighters played "zero-sum-games" with gusto; there was just so much business out there and these were the men who knew how to stake out territory and get it. Andrew Carnegie, the steel magnate, was the prototype. Like craftsmen, jungle fighters were also men of conscience. Although they could sit at the board of directors' table and figuratively decapitate incompetents with aplomb, they grieved. Characteristically they did not dodge issues; they settled scores eyeball to eyeball, tasting not only the self-satisfaction of authority but also the agony of pity.



After World War I, as the giant businesses the jungle fighters had built became bureaucracies, and as "public relations" grew into an everyday national preoccupation, those jungle fighters were gradually displaced by the smoother "organization men." Like the jungle fighters, the organization men were paternalistic and authoritarian. But unlike those pioneers of industry and finance who were motivated primarily by competitive zeal, "organization men," our psychoanalyst believes, were more motivated by a fear of failure. They were, nevertheless, characteristically honest; they were cautious men of conscience. They looked men in the eye when they fired them. They were "men of the heart," possessing qualities with an emotional content: a sense of commitment, loyalty, humor, and spontaneity.

In the early 1960s, a fourth style emerged to take the prominent leadership role. Maccoby identifies practitioners of this style as "the gamesmen." The gamesmen, impatient under the yoke of their paternalistic and authoritarian bosses, and educated more often than not in game-theory-oriented business schools, turned over a new page in leadership practices. The gamesmen believe that if one properly analyzes the "game" of life, the "game" of management, the "game" of leadership, one sees that it is not necessary to frame the problem as a "zero-sum-game." Rather, in their minds, American life can be analyzed as a "game" in which any number can play and win.

These gamesmen were relaxed, objective, open-minded, detached, cerebral swingers. Such emotional baggage as commitment or conscience they deemed inefficient and unnecessary. "Play your cards rationally to win and go to bed and sleep like a baby without remorse." Some bothered with love and families; many gave them a tentative try and quit when they found them too burdensome. Maccoby said that there was a theatrical production that typified the leaders of each of these four ages and that the drama of the gamesmen was portrayed in the movie "The Sting." You might remember that screenplay;

in it, fair, competitive cooperative swingers, with the aid of teamwork and technology, destroyed the hung-up, authoritarian "Godfather."

The gamesmen, concluded psychoanalyst Maccoby, were basically "men of the head:" cool intellectual types, walking calculating machines. "Men of the head" do many things well, but often have trouble coping with unpleasantness. These self-confident, cool, flexible men don't like to discipline people, they don't like to look people in the eye when they fire them. Moreover, they often crave to be loved, and that is a great leadership weakness. True leaders must be willing to stake out territory and identify and declare enemies. They must be fair and they may be compassionate, but they cannot be addicted to being loved by everybody. The man who has to be loved is an extortionist's dream. That man will do anything to avoid face-to-face unpleasantness; often he will sell his soul for praise. He can be had.

It was in the heyday of these gamesmen that some of their number, the cool, glib, analytical, cerebral so-called defense intellectuals took charge of the Pentagon under the direction of Robert Strange McNamara. At that juncture, I was fortunate enough to take a two-year sabbatical from military service for study at Stanford University. It was there that I started asking myself what truly rules the world: sentiment, efficiency, honor, justice?

The educated man, particularly the educated leader, copes with the fact that life is not fair. The problem for education is not to teach people how to deal with success but how to deal with failure. And the way to deal with failure is not to invent scapegoats or to lash out at your followers. Moreover, a properly educated leader, especially when harassed and under pressure, will know from his study of history and the classics that circumstances very much like those he is encountering have occurred from time to time on this earth since the beginning of history. He will avoid the self-indulgent error of seeing himself in a predicament so unprecedented, so unique, as to justify his making an exception to law, custom, or morality in

favor of himself. The making of such exceptions has been the theme of public life throughout much of our lifetimes. For 20 years, we've been surrounded by gamesmen unable to cope with the wisdom of the ages. They make exceptions to law and custom in favor of themselves because they chose to view ordinary dilemmas as unprecedented crises.

Of course, it has been generally toward the above issue that I directed a course at the Naval War College. My formula for attacking this problem—both at the War College and in my present assignment at The Citadel—is the assignment of enough hard-core philosophy (The Book of Job, the Socratic dialogues of Plato, some of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Epicurus' *Enchiridion*, enough of Immanuel Kant to understand his concept of duty) and the reading of enough high-quality ultimate situation literature (Feodor Dostoyevsky's *House of the Dead*, Albert Camus's *Plague*, Joseph Conrad's *Typhoon*, and Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*) as to deter self-pity when in extremis. With philosophy as the parent discipline, a discussion of courage might be focused on the writer who most thoroughly treated it, Aristotle. This might lead to the question of the validity of his viewpoint that courage is impossible in the absence of fear, that courage might be defined as a measure of how well one handles fear. How about the relationship between fear and imagination? Conrad has one of his characters state that imagination is the mother of fear. Must not a leader have imagination? If that breeds fear, might that not sap his courage? He surely must have courage above all else . . . etc. From such readings and discussions come understandings and clarifications of those elements of leadership which served in antiquity and those which must serve now.

Leadership must be based on goodwill. Goodwill does not mean posturing and, least of all, pandering to the mob. It means obvious and wholehearted commitment to the helping followers. We are tired of leaders we fear, tired of leaders we love, and most tired of leaders who let us take liberties with them. What we



need for leaders are men of the heart who are so helpful that they, in effect, do away with the need of their jobs. But leaders like that are never out of a job, never out of followers. Strange as it sounds, great leaders gain authority by giving it away.

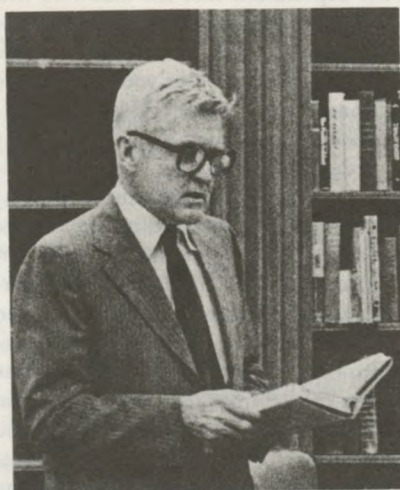
I am firmly convinced that the time I spent at Stanford has been a major force in molding my own personality as a leader. And I am just as firmly convinced that education in the classics and in the principles of human relationships gave me far better preparation for being a prisoner of war than did the traditional survival and evasion training. My ideas on the art of moral leadership received their most profound testing in the stress and degradation—yes, in the extortion environment—of a Communist prisoner of war camp.

The intensity and stark drama of my eight years in North Vietnam provided a quantity and range of leadership challenge that would more than fill an ordinary lifetime. In mere months or weeks, men made and destroyed their reputations. Those behind bars seemed to be scanning reams of data on the problems of good and evil in fast time. The extortion system, powered by our enemy's willingness to torture and impose isolation, quickly drove to the surface issues of moral integrity which at the pace of normal life could take years to fester and erupt into public view.

For united resistance, men had to get on quickly with the business of assimilating knowledge of the character traits of their fellow prisoners. This knowledge had to be more penetrating and more calculating than the sort commonly found sufficient for amicable social life out here in freedom. Is the newcomer emotionally stable? (We had to make a good guess as to whether he had the steadfastness and composure to warrant being trusted with secret material in that torture environment.) Does he have moral integrity? In the privacy of the torture room, will he go to the wall in silence, or do what is so commonplace in the business world nowadays and try to make a deal? Is he sophisticated enough to avoid falling for the interrogator's bait? Will he work his way

out on a limb by "gabbing" after that clever interrogator has dangled before him such American-life enticements as: Let us reason together; You are a pragmatic people, meet us halfway?

In the extortion environment one



can always better his own position at the expense of his fellows by holding still for the manipulator's setting up of subtle compromises. A loner makes out by making acknowledged or tacit deals. This will never do. The intensity of life in jail clearly illuminated for us prisoners of war the truth that for the greatest good for the greatest number of us, for our maximum happiness, maximum self-respect, maximum protection of one another, each of us had to submerge our individual survival instincts into an ideal of universal solidarity. "No deals" and "Unity over self" became our mottos.

Some of you are doubtless skeptical of the practicability of such ideals which seem to ask more of a man than human nature might be thought to allow. To the skeptics let me say right off that when there is leadership by example, and when there is a commonly shared threat of total estrangement and humiliation, united magnanimous behavior can become a reality. When a man looks at the bottom of the barrel through creeping and growing fissures in the thin veneer of civilization that coats his existence, he suddenly realizes that his slip back into barbarism could come about in weeks. As he peers over the edge of his world, it dawns on him how lone-

some and terrible it would be down there without communication, friends, or common cultural ties. He vividly realizes how men, fellow countrymen, need one another for understanding and for sanity. As he sees himself clinging to a receding civilization with his fingernails, it becomes clear to him that "No deals" and "Unity over self" are not goody-goody idealistic slogans; rather they are practical guides to action.

We saw that we had to build and tend our own civilization if we were to keep ourselves from becoming animals. A man must relate to a community, a commonality of communication style, a commonality of ritual, of laws, of traditions, of poetry, of shared dreams, if he is to prevail, if he is to resist. "Man does not live by bread alone." Learning the truth and full meaning of that biblical adage was lesson number one for us in that crucible of pressure. It goes without saying that the first job of leadership is to provide the communication necessary for that civilization, that ritual, those laws, those traditions.

The problem was to improvise a communications system for a prison camp in which everybody lived in solitary confinement, a solitary confinement in silence, a solitary confinement in which the use of torture was considered just punishment for those who break that silence to communicate with their fellows. Our Vietnam enemies gave us two ways to go on this. We could lie low and not communicate and go to seed over the years of silence and solitude. (One starts "looking for a friend" after a couple of years.) Or we could communicate as a matter of duty and take our lumps. Since the dictates of conscience and morality made the latter the only way to go, the problem became how to communicate stealthily. For us, trapped in isolation in Hanoi, the means for that communication was a tap code that would break through the walls of solitary confinement, the walls of silence. (For the mechanics of the code, I suggest reading Commander Everett Alvarez's "Sound: A POW's Weapon," pages 91-93 in the August 1976 *Proceedings*.)

Leadership basics are vividly por-



trayed in the prison camp example. Prison serves as a useful "test bed" (to use a test pilot expression) in which to study in detail man's behavior under stress, stress of the sort under which many of life's crucial decisions are necessarily made. Mark this down in your book as lesson two: in the high-stress situation, "status" will not carry you as a leader. That is to say, you have to have more going for you than your title, your seniority, your position in your hierarchy, your rank. You cannot get by with performing like a quarterback who is functional only while being protected "in the pocket;" you've got to be able to scramble and improvise, on your feet, and alone. Even this assumes that by the time the pressure is on, you would have earned your followers' respect, and not just their fear or friendship. Unless people respect you as a leader, when the fat is in the fire they'll just listen to your orders and calmly walk away.

Lesson three: under stress, ordinary "transactional" leadership will never cut it. That is to say, transactional

leadership propelled simply by the effect of give and take, leadership driven by the base instincts of the marketplace and bargaining table whereby the leader makes an accommodation in the expectation that his followers will make a complementary accommodation, simply will not stand up. This may come as news to you because the "transactional" leader/follower relationship is so much a part of our way of doing business in everyday economic, social, even academic life. But what to us is the ordinary dance of life, the dance propelled by continuous compromise, finds itself floundering under pressure. Inputs are needed from "transforming" leaders. Transforming leaders don't simply analyze what they think their people want and then try to give them part of it and hope they will receive a counter accommodation in return. Transforming leaders instruct and inspire their followers to recognize worthy needs, and they make those needs their wants. They have a way of raising their followers out of their everyday selves and

into their better selves, of making them conscious of the high-minded goals that lie unconscious beneath their self-centered desires. In summary, the transforming leader has the wisdom to read the minds of his flock, to understand what they want, to know what they ought to want; and he has the persuasive power to implant the latter into their hearts.

In all that I have been saying, I've made the points that leaders under pressure must keep themselves absolutely clean morally (the relativism of the social sciences will never do). They must lead by example, must be able to implant high-mindedness in their followers, must have competence beyond status, and must have earned their followers' respect by demonstrating integrity. What I've been describing as the necessary leadership attributes under pressure are the bedrock virtues all successful leaders must possess, "under pressure and otherwise." Prison was just the "test bed," just the meat-grinder that vividly illuminated these prime building blocks for me.

## Comment and Discussion

(Continued from page 23)

### "Moral Leadership"

(See J. B. Stockdale, pp. 86-89, September 1980 *Proceedings*)

*Lieutenant Commander David M. Lee, U. S. Navy*—Admiral Stockdale is a voice of hope in the silent vacuum of non-direction that presently inflicts the Defense Establishment in general and the Naval Community in particular. His lucid treatise is so elementary, yet so foreign.

The primary role of the officer corps is one of leadership. Technical expertise and management skill, and all that they embody, are not alternatives to such a role, but rather an outgrowth. Admiral Stockdale provides the blueprint for building the very

foundation upon which these and all other skills can be attached.

Those of us who have accepted a commission in the U. S. Navy have been entrusted with a stewardship that is sacred and precious. This stewardship can only be protected and nourished through the embodiment of the basic principles of moral leadership, enacted by the unique and personal style of each individual. It is totally inadequate and incorrect to blame the present state of the Navy on such outside elements as a permissive society, the all-volunteer concept, a self-interested Congress, or a politically motivated civilian authority. The existence of such factors, either real or perceived, is immaterial. We have accepted the special trust of our nation,

and we are responsible and accountable for the ability of the Navy to carry out its mission which includes not only the present peacetime commitments, but preparation in the event of the failure of these commitments.

Moral leadership has to be the cornerstone of the governing policies emanating from the highest organizations in the Navy. If the policies from such organizational levels do not work, such policies must be changed. If the organizations that make such policies cannot accomplish this, the organizations must change. If the constituted civilian authority prevents the policies from being implemented, the uniformed leadership must do what is legally permissible to allow the change, and if that fails, then resign.



In today's Navy there are officers who represent some of the most intellectual and innovative minds this country has to offer. With such individuals, the necessary moral leadership can exist at all levels of the organiza-

tion. What is needed is a top-down review of the strength of our leadership followed by a rebuilding of our officer corps on the foundation of moral leadership. I nominate Admiral Stockdale for such an assignment.

## What Is Worth Resigning For?

By Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale, U. S. Navy (Retired)

A few weeks ago I abruptly resigned from my post as a college president and walked off the campus feeling good about my decision. The sequence of events had been very straightforward. I had found conditions that I believed to be detrimental to students and unfair to faculty, conditions with which I did not wish to be identified. When it became clear to me that prompt reform was impossible, that my governing board's resistance to change would swallow me up and saddle me with a period of complicity, I checked out. . . .

The specifics are really not very interesting. . . . The interesting part has been the split in the reactions to my resignation among those generally on my side. The split cuts right down the age line. With a few notable exceptions, my elders say, "Regrettable. Too bad you couldn't work out a consensus, a compromise with your governing board." My younger adult friends sing a different tune: "Way to go!" "Stick it in their ear!"

This is not the first time I've come across this new attitude, this new spirit in our educated men and women in their 20s and 30s. I don't write it off as a fallout of the 1960s, or as irresponsible exuberance of youth, or as a manifestation of inexperience. I think it is born of a new, responsible awakening of moral sensitivity. I like it. My first brush with it came when I was president of the Naval War College. There I taught a course in moral philosophy and periodically required each of my students to submit a paper on the resolution of moral dilemmas he had experienced, or observed or read about. The student picked the subject, but naturally in a course given in the 1970s to military officers and government civilians, educated men and women between 30 and 45, issues of the Vietnam War got a lot of play. The same difference of attitude between youth and age on how to deal with Catch-22 squeeze plays, how to deal with responsibility without authority, how to deal with being trapped in the rising waters of complicity without access to either faucet or drain plug, showed up in those papers.

An oft-chosen Vietnam dilemma along those lines was the problem of the on-scene military commander who was deluged by over-control and meddling from Washington. The older officer typically wrote: "Our commanders frequently could not do what they thought was right. They were forced to make continual compromises. Nevertheless, they had a lifetime of experience that their country needed and thus a moral obligation to hang in there and work it out. No purpose would have been served by their stepping down in protest." More than a few young bucks—Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines—had a different slant: "It was a bad show. No officer should let himself get trapped into compromising or waffling his principles. Any commander worth his salt so trapped should quit in protest."

Has my generation become hooked on collegial solutions, on "keeping the lid on," on "seeking a consensus," on making a deal to preserve unanimity? Corporate life, board life, and hierarchical life breed that slide to accommodation, we are told, that is necessary to get something accomplished, and that invitation to moral weakness. If you don't think any weakness is incurred by having been conditioned to reasonable compromise, try living in a communist jail for a few years. There, all they want is for you to "be reasonable." The name of their game is extortion, and the source of their leverage lies in their imposition of feelings of fear and guilt. Step One is getting the American prisoner to make a deal, a reasonable deal; any deal will do for a start. From my own experience, I can state that a "Prison Interrogator's Handbook" would list among suggested openers: "Let us reason together." "You Americans are a sensible pragmatic people; meet us halfway."

I do not advocate a POW name, rank, and serial number stance at every board of directors meeting here at home. But neither do I advocate suppressing moral sensibility in the interest of cooperation—or tenure. Professor Richard A. Gabriel of St. Anselm's College, a prolific writer on military ethics, points out in the May issue of *Army* magazine that over the last 20 years Canada has had 27 generals retire or resign in protest, while during the same period the U. S. Army has had one.

It's my guess that when today's American young people reach their peak, their statistics in this respect—in military, corporate, or academic life—will change. And that ain't all bad. (Reprinted from *The Washington Post*, 21 September 1980)

## "Engineers As Tacticians?"

(See B. D. Cole, pp. 90-91, July 1980; J. F. Shaw, p. 95, October 1980 *Proceedings*)

Commander Anson H. Burlingame, Jr., U. S. Navy, Ohio (SSBN-726) *Pre-commissioning Unit*—I try to keep an open mind whenever I read the *Proceedings*. Sometimes it is difficult to do so, the July 1980 issue being an example. I was startled by a suggestion to place Trident submarines in the Great Lakes (pp. 23-25). I was amazed by the design proposed as a possible new attack submarine (pp. 88-89). However, I was compelled to reply to the "Nobody asked me, but . . ." concerning the education and training of midshipmen and junior officers.

The key for success for any naval officer is for him to do his absolute best in whatever job he is assigned and to require the same dedication from the people that work for him. The officer who substitutes a management technique for hard work and a thorough (yes, technical) understanding of his job or neglects any aspect of a ship's operation is headed for trouble somewhere in his career.

If a naval officer must be technically competent, the question is then raised: in which discipline? The answer depends on the officer's job and seniority. A new officer reporting to his first ship must qualify as a watch officer and learn his divisional duties. His required level of technical knowledge in these two areas is independent of his previous training (nuclear or non-nuclear) or the division to which he is assigned. As the officer becomes more senior, he will perform a broader range of duties and his technical knowledge will expand. By the time he is an executive officer or commanding officer, he will have a detailed technical understanding of the entire ship. If he performs each job to the best of his ability and takes the initiative to study those disciplines in which he has not been assigned extensive duties, the officer will be ready to assume major shipboard responsibilities because of his competence, not because of his seniority. Engineering readiness is vital to combat readiness, as is weapons readiness, personnel readiness, etc. Technical compe-

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