

"Command Leadership"

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ADDRESS OF REAR ADMIRAL DANIEL TO THE STAFF AND STUDENTS OF THE U. S. NAVAL WAR COLLEGE AT NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND ON 14 FEBRUARY 1957

Admiral Robbins Gentlemen, it is a pleasure and honor to speak to such an erudite group -- especially on the subject of leadership. I do it however with some misgivings, because you are all experienced leaders while previously I have talked only to the very young people just starting a career and they were very receptive to anything I might tell them about leadership. You however, I am sure, will be a much more critical audience. Knowing this I have been looking around for material. Admiral Burke's talk when he had my command was by far the best but, I understand that it has already been repeated once, verbatim, so I could not very well use any of it again today. The saying is that if you borrow from one writer it is plagiarism, but if you borrow from two it is research. That is a warning to you that there is some research in my talk today, however, I will not use any of it that has not been confirmed by my own experience.

Now leadership has been defined in the dictionary as ability to lead. That sounds very simple but there are different kinds of leadership in the world today, for instance Communist leadership, which is based on fear of consequences, of violating orders. It does not have the solid foundation of conviction and belief to sustain it, hence we have the iron curtain. Opposed is the leadership of free men which originated in faith in and respect for cause.

It has a basis of confidence in superiors and in their authority. This last was well illustrated during the trouble in the mid-east last fall. Some of our destroyers are commanded better than other; however, when the chips were down, all our ships sailed completely ready for battle, and we deployed at least two-thirds of the Force. These ships according to their operational commanders performed magnificently despite problems of leadership,

I would like to discuss communist leadership, because it is the main threat to our way of life. You hear daily about this, but remember the story of the farmer who went to his neighbor to purchase a mule. The neighbor insisted that this mule would not have the traditional traits of such an animal. The neighbor assured the farmer that he would have no trouble at all and that everytime he told the mule to get up and go the mule would do that, and would not be stubborn. So the farmer paid the price and took the mule home. The next morning he hitched him to the plow, said "Get up", and the mule wouldn't move. He tried almost everything and the mule stayed right where he was. In disgust, he went back to his neighbor and said, "Hey, I thought you said that mule would obey my commands without any trouble, without any beating, without any of the other trouble you usually have with mules." "Well", the neighbor said, "Let me look into this." He took one look at the mule, picked up a two-by-four and gave the mule a terrific blow over the head, immediately the mule started plowing, and as he went around the field, carried out all the commands, and the farmer said, "Well, you didn't tell me that,

you said that all I had to say was 'Get up!'. "Yes," said the neighbor, "But you have to wake him up first."

Remember always that part of your job is to keep your fellows awake to the communist menace. Perhaps you won't use as vicious a method as the neighbor used on the mule but you must use some sort of method, anyway. It is also well in this connection to remember some other facts to use in keeping your followers awake. Leon Trotsky said, "Anyone desiring a quiet life, has done badly to be born in the 20th century." Manalesky, who was the Russian presiding officer in the U. N. Security Group in 1949, said 26 years ago, in an address before the Lenin School of Political Warfare, and I quote, "War to the hilt between communism and capitalism is inevitable. Today, we are not strong enough to attack. Our time will come in twenty or thirty years. To win we shall need the element of surprise. The bourgeoisie will have to be put to sleep. So we shall begin by launching the most spectacular peace movement on record. There will be electrifying overtures and unheard of concessions. The capitalist countries, X stupid and decadent will rejoice to cooperate in their own destruction. They will leap at another chance to be friends. As soon as their guard is down, we shall smash them with our iron fist."

It is obvious gentlemen, how much of this boast has been made good. In the last half century, Russians have gone from the oxcart to the jet plane. They rule half the world. They rule eight hundred million people. Every hour of every day, forty four square miles of territory have come under their domination. These facts place us in the position where we must have superior leadership to counter this threat.

There is no doubt in my mind about the effectiveness of communist leadership, no matter how much we decry it. Doctor James Burnham, who has spoken before this august body, knows what he is talking about when he said, "When the communist enterprise" and he calls it illegal, which is true, "Was founded in 1903, and a dispute arose over its organization. Lenin, was all for centralized organization based in Moscow. Centralized discipline and run by professionals. Others wanted a looser and decentralized form of organization with amateurs and semi-professionals in it. Lenin's scheme unfortunately won out, and today we fight professionals, unfortunately with semi-professionals and amateurs.

A leader has been described as one well educated, well trained, and well motivated. This takes time and ruthless elimination of those who do not measure up in the selection process. In the communist system this is easy to accomplish, but in ours, it is much more difficult. General LeMay comes closer to it, because he has delegated to him the great power of selection of people to join his force, promotion and rewards, and the separation of those who grow weary and inefficient. He thus maintains an elite force of professionals at the expense, it is true, of the rest of the Air Force. However, it is very effective.

We may have to do this eventually with our own main forces in this nuclear age. Especially if our manning levels are reduced. Communist professionalism was vividly demonstrated to me in the 15 months I was with the UN Truce Team. Communist truce teams just didn't make mistakes. The central committee in Moscow made sure they didn't, because all matters that were not received in writing that might come up in the negotiations had to be referred to Moscow. The one small mistake that was made, which was one of translation, by a North Korean during the time I was there, caused his purging. One of the reasons that they were able to maintain this fine record was that they never answered any questions. The State Department use to say to us, "We would like you to question a communist tomorrow about -----" about such and such. Well, we would go in and carry out our orders, and we would ask the questions, the communists would just look at us blankly and if we persisted, they would go into their big alligator bag and pull out sheet number 23 or 24 which was usually some sort of propaganda like "When you so treacherously invaded North Korea on the 19th of June." Toward the end of the negotiations, we were negotiating the demarcation line, and it was apparent everytime we disputed who held a hill or some territory, that after the negotiations ended unsatisfactorily at night the communists would hit this position with heavy forces, and attempt to take it so that the next morning they could say, "You were wrong yesterday." With about two days to go before the armistice, one of these disputes came up and it involved an outpost close by the truce headquarters. This outpost was held by a platoon of about 50 South Korean Marines. And that night it was attacked by a full battalion of Chinese troops. The Marines had anticipated this and had zeroed in their artillery and tanks and as a result a heavy field of fire was available. The North Chinese made 19 attacks two of them in broad daylight. At about 8:30 the Marines heard the battalion commander being told by a superior to make another attack. He answered his superior by saying that he was sorry that he couldn't do that because he had no men left. When we flew over the battle field the next morning you could see the eight hundred stretched out at the foot of the hill, and in the outpost were twenty surviving South Korean Marines, and about 60 dead Chinese. This illustrates the ruthless but effective leadership of their military contingent. Another fine example was the prison camps I visited. These were on islands south of Pusan and I visited them with General Harrison. We were inspecting one compound when an army officer in charge said that "We had a lot of trouble here last nite." He said that the prisoners when they lined up for chow started to sing and then they started to sway, and then they charged the sentry box, grabbed the sentry and killed him. The sentry box was protected by at least five layers of bobwire and it seemed impossible that anyone could have gotten up there and got him. But this mass of communist prisoners did. And the reason they did was because they had back of them, directing them, a well trained and motivated leader who was using illegal and terroristic methods. This leader and many others of the same ilk had infiltrated these camps in order to embarrass the U. N. and if possible to cause us to keep

many troops in the main line by which to keep the trouble under control. I asked the marines about the type of soldiers they were fighting against. At that time they were against the Chinese and they said they were just as good as any we have ever fought against. My visit to a Canadian Brigade confirmed this. I arrived one morning and there was quite a bit of excitement. I found out that for about two days the Canadians had a small party of men infiltrating the enemy lines with the purpose of capturing some prisoners. They had been offered the attractive reward of a case of whiskey by the general and they persisted there, stayed in back of those lines --- It was almost three days they had been there. They thought they could handle only one prisoner but they never could find a communist walking alone, which is one of their methods. However, they persisted, and on this particular day they had cut one of the wires and finally a big Chinese came out alone to fix it. They jumped him although it was broad daylight and brought him across no-man's-land. They were covered by a force which had been particularly delegated for it. When this man arrived at the general's headquarters, his head was about twice the normal size from the beating he had received. He was murmuring something. One of his captors said to the interpreter "What is that Chinese saying? He kept on saying that all the way across. We thought he was getting tough, so we hit him with a blackjack every time he said. We didn't want to have any trouble." The interpreter replied, "Well, what he is saying is 'Please stop hitting me!'" Well anyway, this Chinese was worked on for weeks but they never got even his name or his outfit's identity.

This indicates pretty well how efficient the brand of communist leadership is that we have to contend with. Needless to say their methods would be illegal, completely illegal and unacceptable in a democracy.

Now let's discuss the leadership we must have to survive --- our own leadership. First of all, I am going to discard the idea of discussing the traits of well known leaders such as Napoleon, Lee, Hitler, because as Churchill said, they more often gave their highest trait more as a result of circumstance than anything else. Thus examining their traits would be misleading in our search for superior leadership.

I believe we get a truer picture studying leadership as observed in our Destroyer Forces during the past twenty months. During this time I have visited about 200 ships, mostly commanded by relatively young men. I have also observed and talked to twice that many captains. Now about 30 per cent of these captains were superior leaders and captains. The rest of them varied from very good to adequate with only a few having been detached because of inefficiency or because they got into serious trouble. Also of interest might be the fact that I consider about 75 percent of my division commanders as superior leaders. These are picked from the ratio of one out of four destroyer captains. This would make us assume that we should have one hundred per cent superior leaders as division commanders. But it just doesn't work that way. Captains who found it easy to command a ship well,

found themselves in hot water when they had to direct older and more experienced people. Of the Squadron Commanders, about 50 per cent were superior leaders. Now these were picked from people who had been through many selections and comprised about 40 per cent of a year group. You might think they would all be superior but don't forget that as people grow older health and other reasons cause them to lose efficiency. And anyway, I don't consider more than half of them as really superior. Now our captains must lead with their own abilities as they have comparatively little power compared to other leaders. They can't promote. They must take the officers and men assigned to them. They have no selection. The power to punish is severely limited by the Uniform Code of Military Justice. It is quite difficult for them to get rid of bad actors or incompetents. They must depend largely on semi-pros and amateurs to operate ships. Now despite this handicap, it is wonderful to know that at least 30 per cent of our captains give such a splendid performance, that they have produced as fine a ship and crew as I have ever seen since I have been in the Navy. In this connection it is important to note that the type of ship and the quantity and quality of officers and crew were not significant. What made these captains stand out? First, hard work. Hard work takes officers a long way, but not always -- it depends. I knew of one commanding officer who used to work till ten thirty every night. He used to insist on examining every enlisted record himself. He said that was the only way he could be sure that they were right. Well, his records on the ship were in wonderful shape when we inspected him, but the ship itself was never worth a damn battlewise -- it stood last in everything. And then of course we always know the check-off specialist. The captain that has a list to be checked off for everything. Everything gets checked off but the results are few. Another one is the one man task force who delegates nothing -- everything must be done by him because he trusts no one. As a result the organization falls to pieces, when he gets sick or leaves. The above people might be well described as energetic, but stupid. In contrast is the hard-working dedicated captain, with common sense. He inspects the bilges and then climbs into the control tower to inspect what he knows is a perfect space to reward the men who keep it that way. He is also the captain on deck and in command when the going is tough. He gets out of his warm bed and returns to his ship on a stormy night. He confers with and advises his head of departments constantly, no matter how tired he might be. A captain who works hard to ensure the men are treated right -- he inspects their food and living conditions, and shows interest in their performance. That all takes hard work. There is no doubt that hard work produces if properly applied. All the superior captains that I know possess that trait in a very high degree.

Next, knowledge. If it can be said of an officer, "He knows his stuff," A long leg on the starboard tack has been completed. He has laid a true course and is steering well. All of our best captains possess this trait. It doesn't require them to be interlectual but they must possess intellectual curiosity and native intelligence, plus pride in knowing well their profession.

Consideration. At sea in formation it is necessary to remember the next astern. Failure to do so will result in collision and disaster. In applying this to everyday life, it is an admonition to realize that others are affected by your actions or deeds. I can truly say that I have never been in a ship that was happy and efficient where the captain was not considerate of those beneath him. However, this trait must not take the form of paternalism when dealing with our

× democratic sailors. On the other hand, it might be quite effective with English sailors as it apparently was when Admiral Mountbatten, in making a speech on leadership, said that he had made it a custom to have his executive officer always post on his mirror every morning a few interesting things about the home life of the crew such as one John

× Jones' wife has had a baby, or seaman Smith's Mother is ill, things like that. And he said he would then memorize these facts and at morning quarters speak to each man concerned and console him. He said that he felt that this demonstrated to them his interest in their personal lives. I don't think this would work in our ships. It would be

× resented as an intrusion of privacy. I feel quite sure of that. Attention to the individual in America is believed to be more on the order. When I was the executive officer of a destroyer, I used to answer all the many requests for extensions with either an "Affirmative" or "Negative," rather a business like way. The captain said to me one day, "Daniel you are from a large city and probably don't realize that in this small town where the young friends have probably talked him in to asking for an extension -- the girl at the telegraph office knows him, and they finally get him to send this long message to you about extending his leave and you answer with one word. He loses faith and returns to the ship not very happy. On the other hand if you had replied 'Regret Negative, your presence is needed badly to ready the ship for sea,' his prestige would have been raised in his home town, and he would have returned more willingly to his ship with increased pride in his job, and proud of being a Navy Man."

The next trait is warmness. We hear a lot about warm and enthusiastic leadership, we also hear that when danger threatens they always send for the S.O.B. Well, it is my observation that in peace or war all leaders if they are to be successful and effective under all conditions, must have warmness. They must have warmness either outwardly, and I don't mean the gooey kind, or they must have warmness inside although outwardly they appear to outsiders a cold exterior. All the real S.O.B.'s that I know came to a bad end. One of them was shot in the back. Admiral King was tough, but only a warm man could write fitness reports like he did for those who worked with and for him. Personally I never knew him to ever fire an officer who was trying to do his job. General Patton is the typical picture to the public of a tough soldier. I didn't know him, but I have known his wife fairly well, his family, and just talking to them convinced me that underneath all that exterior he showed to the world, he was a very warm and emotional man indeed.

I had a captain once report on board who was very aloof, very efficient. In fact he horrified us by getting up and boasting that as long as he commanded that ship he would never take any paint off it, or any other ship coming alongside. As a matter of fact, after 18 months, he could still say that. However, this man, despite his aloofness and apparent coldness, was warm inside, and when the crew discovered it, there could have been no captain that I know of who held the affection and esteem of his crew like this one. The occurrence that brought out his warmth or humaneness occurred shortly after he reported aboard. We were at sea on the forth of July and someone asked for permission to fire some excess rockets in celebration. On the morning in question he came up on the bridge, he noticed the rather wise type of quartermaster had removed all the protective covers from the matches of the rockets. As he passed X he said, "If you aren't careful you will set them all off at once." Well the time came to let them go, and when the first one was fired it fell down and the sparks started catching the other rockets. In panic, the quartermaster tried to get hold of them. They all fell down. They were pointed towards the bridge which was circular and then all hell broke loose. With everything in shambles, with both life boats on fire, the captain still looked gravely ahead. When everything had quieted down and the quartermaster stood trembling, expecting to have at least his head bitten off, the captain just turned and calmly said, "Well I knew that was going to happen." And that is all that did happen.

I think a national weakness of ours is a reluctance to fire those not measuring up. If a man tries to do a job we tolerate him. In the old days we used to pass him along, but you can't do that today. I don't think we can tolerate this situation any longer in an atomic age. We must find a way to painlessly separate him. Perhaps when we become smaller in this guided missile, supersonic, nuclear age, he will disappear as a natural byproduct of forced attrition. I can tell you, it is a big problem in a democracy.

The next trait is enthusiasm. A captain with this trait can literally move mountains. It is infectuous. It is the spark that makes ships go. It doesn't necessarily mean that the captain has to be an extrovert. It just means that he be more interested in his Navy, his job, his officers and men, than in himself. I saw a wonderful example of this during my tour in command of the Destroyer Force. A young enthusiastic integrated commander took over one of the oldest most inefficient and dirtiest ships in our force. In five months it was the cleanest, or certainly one of the cleanest, and one of the most efficient, and a very happy ship it was indeed. Ordinarily this would have taken at least a year for a superior captain to accomplish. This young man did it in five months, X gentlemen, and he did it without any more help than the previous captain had had.