

**Prof. Dr. Vakur VERSAN**  
İ.Ü. Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi

## SOCIETY AND LEADERSHIP

Leaders are important every where, and the importance of leadership in all sectors of society has never been greater than today.

For they are the agents of change, whose intuitive abilities and personal qualities are essential in getting followers to extend their energies and attitudes toward larger goals and values.

"The notion that a people can run it self and its affairs anonymously" said William James, "is now well known to be the silliest of absurdities".

Leadership is often thought of as being primarily personal in character, as being founded upon individual preeminence or accomplishment in a particular field of endeavor. Superior strength superior cunning, superior intelligence, superior knowledge, superior determination any or all of these may well be the means for attaining leadership.

To be sure, the personal qualifications of leadership are vitally important. Yet, important as they are, it is not enough to think of it only in these personal terms.

For leadership is often made or broken by circumstances.

The essential circumstances of leadership are two fold: Political and instutional.

The political circumstances of leadership are the need to be responsive to external political direction and control.

The institutional circumstances of leadership are the need to be responsive to the requirements of intirnal operation of keeping an organization in actual running order.

This responsiveness, especially in a democratic society, is a major factor in the exercise of leadership.

The mission of the leader is to direct the actions of others and it is imperative for him to know the objective to which he intends to lead them. It is also an important quality for him to posses a will-power. He must know how to make decisions and bear responsibility for them. Before making a decision he must inform himself thoroughly and weigh all the circumstances. When he has decided and given his directive he must stick

to it, unless some unexpected and insurmountable obstacle is encountered. Nothing is so discouraging to subordinates as a leader who hesitates. "Firmness", said Napoleon "prevails in all things".

In order to make a decision a leader must have great moral courage, for decisions may frequently be painful to him. Occasionally the sacrifice of a few men becomes necessary for the safety of the cause. At the beginning of the Second World War, Winston Churchill was obliged to remove a good many generals who were his friends.

Thus, a leader can and often must be severe, but he has no right to be cruel or vindictive.

The leader must inspire the respect of his men and there is only one way of acquiring respect and that is to be worthy of it.

A leader must have but one passion: that is for his work and for his profession. He must also be reserved, even to the point of shrouding himself in mystery.

Rudyard Kipling's "Man Who Would Be King" was an adventurer who by sheer force of character dominated several mountain tribes and became their leader. But he lost his prestige and his throne, when he was weak enough to fall in love with one of his subjects and allowed her to see that he was only a man. "How many men", said Napoleon, "get into difficulties merely because of their weaknesses for a woman".

And here, one should speak of the leader's wife: - a different role to play: She must defend him against the world, keep him from fatiguing himself uselessly, refrain from suggesting impulsive action, make her house a peaceful refuge and not another empire to be governed-which is perhaps the most ungovernable of all.

Once, during a discussion of the essential qualities of a statesman in the presence of William Pitt, someone mentioned industry, another energy, still another elegance, Pitt said that on the contrary, the essential quality for a prime minister is patience. He was right, not only for a prime minister but for all, whose duty is to lead groups of men.

An equally necessary virtue is, of course, discretion. "Secrecy" said Richelieu, "is the essence of national affairs".

Charles the First of England lost his throne and his head because of an indiscretion. He was imprudent enough to tell his queen his plan regarding certain members of parliament. The queen told the story to one of her trusted ladies-in--waiting, and the latter, having friends in the other camp lost no time in warning the threatened members. Thus, when the moment arrived the people were up in arms against the king.

"Tell only what is necessary to the person one must tell, and only when it must be told" said Frederick the Great. And, "nothing", wrote General de Gaulle, "strengths the authority so much as silence".

Louis XIV of France had a grand and serious manner, which inspired fear and respect in public, but this prevented the people, whom he greatly admired, from taking liberties, even privately.

It is, no doubt, very difficult for a leader to keep the right balance between the reserve and the solemnity, which is necessary for his position. But this difficulty may easily be overcome by exercising the tact which is one of the natural attributes of a man who is born to great responsibilities.

It is also desirable for a leader to have a broad education. Culture offers the man of action opportunities now and then, to capture his serenity, and it puts at his disposal models of order and clarity.

For to lead a country or a business is, in a sense, a work of art; and the man who has acquired a sense of beauty from his studies and culture will be the more successful for it.

For the leader character, of course, is of the first importance, but intelligence is also essential. A leader's intelligence must have simplicity and clarity. Action is difficult when the mind is full of complex theories and schemes.

A leader must have a few very simple ideas, acquired from experience, and confirmed by putting them into practice. It is an old Turkish saying that judgment comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgment.

A leader must also know how to use the minds of others. "One must listen a great deal and speak little", said Franklin, "in order to govern a nation properly". But only certain men who possess exact information are to be listened to. It is an excellent idea to say nothing, and it is no less useful to impose silence on talkative men.

It was Clement Attlee who said "Democracy means government by discussion, but it is only effective if you can stop people talking".

We must always keep in mind that commanding and administering are two distinct arts.

To command is to lead a group of human beings under discipline towards a definite goal. An army officer knows that he will be obeyed by his men. He also knows perfectly well that his objectives are: which is the defence or taking of a certain territory.

The head of a large business company knows that he must produce, at a given price and in certain quantities and qualities.

But a political leader must direct towards shifting objectives and against the action of a group of people who are not compelled to obey him by anything. He can do nothing without being criticized by opponents whose desire is to put some one else in his place. His lieutenants are not respectful assistants but are his equals and perhaps his eventual successors.

What virtues must we require of a man to whom we entrust the directing of our affairs? Above all, a sense of what is possible?

In politics it is useless to formulate great and noble projects, if, due to the prevailing conditions in the country, they can not be accomplished.

The impulses of free people are at all times a display of forces.

The great statesman realizes precisely what these forces are and he does not allow himself to favour one class, foreseeing the inevitable reactions of the neglected groups.

Mediocre politicians spend most of their time devising schemes and preaching doctrines. They talk of structural reforms, they invent faultless social systems and formulate plans for the future. But a project is never an action. True statesman bows to new theories but takes care of the real needs of the people. He endeavours to accomplish these definite and precise needs in ways that seem possible to him. If he finds obstacles in his path he makes detours. For vanity and intellectual pride are handicaps to the political leader.

It is also a leader's right to retain his leadership. Otherwise how he could accomplish good results without the proper time at his disposal? Time establishes innumerable connections and facilities for the exercise of authority. If it is the clearly expressed will of a nation, its leaders may be changed from time to time. But they must be neither deferred nor changed too often nor dictated by the man in the street. If true liberty is to be established, there must not only be a just code of laws, but also a good moral and ethical education.

The degree of our worthiness to be free people shall be determined by our ability to respect a lawful leader, to agree to the existence of an opposition, to listen to its arguments and especially to put the nation's good above all party prejudices and private interests.

This moral education is even more necessary for those who are destined to lead. In addition to his ability to control his followers, a leader must possess a strong sense of duty. He cannot retain his position unless he renders himself worthy of it every day.

No man is a good leader if, when he has been put at the head of a community or a business enterprise, he seeks only to better his personal affairs.

The role of the leading classes is to direct—that is, to indicate the path of honour and work.

For to lead is not a privilege, it is an honour and it is a trust.