



THE QUALITIES OF THE CHIEF

Command in Operations Exercise for Tactical Leaders

RFT 3.2 Tome 2 (FT-05)

Published on 16/11/2018

Histoire & stratégie

The complexity of the current operating environment requires special qualities for the tactical military leader. In addition to the human and ethical qualities that must be respected and that are beyond the scope of this study, the leader in an operational situation must be able to meet a number of criteria. In addition to leadership ability, understood primarily as the natural ability to impose oneself on others, a wide range of qualities must be added. Some, even if they appear more or less innate, must be developed during the transition to a training organisation. Those described below prove to be cardinal. However, they are not exhaustive.

COURAGE, RESPONSIBILITY AND TRUST IN SOI

In addition to the physical courage inherent in the military profession, the leader's foresight, solidity and firmness must be added to the physical courage inherent in the military profession of his convictions, which can sometimes lead him to deviate somewhat from the letter of his mission to better respect its spirit.

Moreover, while the chief makes decisions based on the thoughts and proposals of his staff most of the time, his intuition may sometimes lead him to take the opposite view. The courage of the leader is clearly expressed in solitude.

In any case, whatever the origin of the conception of his order, the leader, in expressing it, systematically engages his own responsibility and not that of his staff. Herein lies the real intellectual courage.

When the situation is critical, and all the subordinates' eyes are on the leader, it is important for the leader, in the midst of his loneliness, to draw from him the strength of soul to decide, certainly, but above all, against all odds, to stick to this solution until it is

achieved. In these circumstances, the leader is always an example for his subordinates.

BE GIFTED OF INTUITION

It is true that there are and are being implemented methods of reasoning for operational decision making as well as decision support tools. But these are only "toolboxes" at the service of the staff, at its level.

On the other hand, the chief must retain his freedom of judgement in making decisions, certainly by taking into account the proposals of his staff, but above all by following the personal inclination that his intuition gives him. As such, the recognized legitimacy of any chief is a function of the proven relevance of his intuition.

As an intrinsic quality of the human personality and an inseparable complement to competence, intuition develops and is maintained only through a slow and continuous process of reevaluation. It is an intrinsic quality of the human personality and an inseparable complement to competence. This preliminary work, which accompanies the whole career, aims at storing and then apprehending a certain number of examples of situations, allowing one to react very quickly in times of crisis and avoid mistakes already made.

General Beaufre, who was for a long time part of the first circle of General de Lattre's entourage, describes in an article in the RMI the very personal and intuitive method that General de Lattre had of

Lattre to apprehend the cases. It should be noted that Juin, long presented as the anti de Lattre par excellence, "worked" in a similar way.

"In the presence of a problem, General de Lattre, far from aiming at a theoretical solution, begins by exploring the possible. He does this like everything else, with passion. First of all, he informs himself scrupulously, especially not through files, of course, but through conversations, discussions with those who can know. His concern is direct information, "on the spot". In doing so, he opens wide the radio antennae of his intuition, he listens, he searches, he gropes, because, underneath his superb exterior, this man is modest and doubts his judgment until an inner revelation has shown him the way.

After this phase of exploration of the possible, the phase of elaboration begins. Here his method is truly personal: he has prepared this elaboration by a careful choice of the men around him. It is with them, collectively, that he will gradually mature his decision. »

Gal BEAUFRE

Le général de Lattre, Revue militaire d'information 1962/2.

ABILITY TO GAIN CONFIDENCE

The leader must strive to build and maintain a climate of mutual trust and understanding with subordinates, superiors, neighbours and allies as well as non-military partners.

Subordinates

Similarly, a climate of trust and confidence in subordinates must be created, earned and maintained. It is based on the belief that subordinates have fully understood and integrated the spirit of the mission, that they have bought into its rationale and that they are confident that they have the freedom to choose how the mission is to be carried

out. This is why the notion of control, induced by the Anglo-Saxon "backbrief", is essential, and must not be allowed to be overlooked. This is why the notion of control, which is a result of the Anglo-Saxon backbrief, is crucial and should not be seen as a sign of mistrust, but rather as a legitimate and unavoidable step in the iterative order preparation process.

The example of General Duchêne, who was relieved of command of the 6th Army after the rout of 27 May 1918 on the Chemin des Dames, constitutes, because of the consequences of the rout, a legitimate and unavoidable step in the iterative process of drawing up orders. The consequences of his bad character on his immediate entourage, the typical example of the chief who inhibits his staff by the total lack of confidence that the latter feels towards him.

"The common ground of the reproaches made against General Duchêne was his unfortunate character. A dour mood, a perpetual rumbling, a storm of rebuffs, right away swearing at him for no reason. To approach him became for his officers a torment to which they only ventured at the last extremity. His chief of staff, forced to endure his outbursts of anger, sulked at him for several days when he had really exceeded the measure. Such things are hard to believe, but it is said that to the letter, it was incredible. The officer who briefed me described the dreary meals at the general's table: him scowling and grumbling, the chief of staff, one elbow on the table, ostensibly turning his back on his general and never opening his mouth, the rest of the entourage terrified. In the offices, even in disarray. An officer approaches a head of department: my colonel, what do we do about it? What do we do? I don't give a damn! Go ask the general! I wanted to know this morning, he told me I was taking him... For sure, I'm not going back.

The result? An embittered general staff, always in trouble, not daring to take responsibility. These men, most of whom were valuable, discouraged, no longer interested in a job that might not be worth the effort... They were always trembling at the idea of a brutal quarrel, falling on them like a trifle. And, for those rare moments when this irascible chief consented to moderate himself, an ease of understanding, a gift of clarity, a talent at last, that matched so well with his magnificent presence and his beautiful male face and proud soldier's face."

Quoted by Pierrefeue

GQ.G Sector 1. (Paris 1920. Illustrated French edition. Volume 2. Page 170)

From the superiors

The effective application of a goal-based command style is based on mutual understanding and trust. In the eyes of the higher echelon, it is a matter of showing them that the intent of the mission, i.e., the spirit of the mission, is fully understood and adhered to. The scope for initiative will depend directly on the relationship with the higher echelons.

General de Langle de Cary, commander of the 4th army in 1914, always perfectly loyal to Joffre, criticized it no less in his published notebooks post-mortem notebooks the lack of consultation and the excessive centralization that the latter showed towards his army commanders due to a lack of confidence. Foch and Castelnau, the future army group commanders openly and officially, at their level, presented the same grievances.

"The operations plan is the entire work of General Joffre and his staff. It has not been submitted to the examination and assessment of the High Council of War. Most of the army commanders - myself among them - we only knew the area of concentration of our armies. We knew nothing of the General-in-Chief's intentions. It was his method of acting with the sole assistance of his intimate entourage, without consulting his army commanders, without even informing them, other than by the instructions and orders he sent them. I am not criticizing, but I believe that the method based on collaboration and trust is preferable. It does not in any way diminish the authority of the supreme commander who alone makes the decision."

General de Langle de Cary...

Command memories. (Paris 1935. Payot. Page 171)

Neighbours and allies

The relations that a leader maintains with his neighbours in the accomplishment of his missions take on special significance in a multinational context. Given the different languages, cultures and military doctrines, it is highly desirable to know exactly in what spirit the neighbour concerned intends to accomplish the mission he has received and vice versa.

On 23 August 1914, although he disapproved of both the principle and the expediency, Lanrezac, commanding the 5th Army, attacked the Bülow's army, at the Sambre de Charleroi, in accordance with Joffre's orders. It was a failure that day. Placed in an unfavourable balance of power and perceiving very clearly the threat of von Klück's army winding up his device, Lanrezac decided to retreat immediately. He reported to the HQG, which approved, aware that this withdrawal of the left wing would lead to the withdrawal of the entire French army. The British army, deployed to the left of the 5th Army, was discovered by this withdrawal. On 24 August, it was strongly attacked by von Klück and defeated at Mons. French, whose relations with Lanrezac had been very fresh since the beginning of the campaign, blamed this failure on the withdrawal of the 5th Army, which he was unaware of. It will take all the tactical skill of General Sordet, commanding the cavalry corps, to allow French to temporarily break contact and withdraw. From now on, scalded by the attitude of his right-hand neighbor, French will systematically take 24 hours ahead of him in his retreat maneuver. This misunderstanding leading to a lack of liaison between the two armies of the allied left wing will be one of the causes of Lanrezac's brutal relinquishment of command of the 5th army on 3 September, Joffre needing a united left wing to lead what will become the Battle of the Marne.

Non-military actors

Establishing and maintaining sustained relations with the other players in the theatre of operations is essential, since the crisis settlement process has now become global and in any case beyond the control of the military alone. However, such relations should be based on partnership and, above all, should not be imposed. Real and formalised "leadership" in global crisis management remains today an unresolved issue, and therefore the effectiveness of joint action depends to a large extent on the quality of the relations maintained.

SENSE OF GENERAL INTEREST

This quality is to be considered in its fullest sense under its double intellectual and moral aspect. It commits the leader to his subordinates as well as to his superiors.

- at the intellectual level, in order to preserve the spirit of the mission, the leader must very quickly take ownership of the action in progress, but also inscribe his own in the continuity of his predecessor in order to respect coherence in the long term. This attitude prohibits any search for a "media stunt", fleeting and ephemeral in nature, and always counterproductive in the medium and long term;
- at the moral level, getting closer to common sense, it is a question of the fundamental honesty which consists in serving the institution and not using its pretensions.

In 1808, for both political and dynastic reasons, Napoleon decided to depose the King of

Spain, which led to the deployment of an expeditionary force to "accompany" the operation. However, while the Spanish population was already strongly opposed to the French presence, the generals, especially Junot, were already very angry with the French. They pillaged, plundered, sacked and seized everything they could, especially the wealth of the religious establishments. In doing so, Napoleon soon found himself confronted with a veritable guerrilla war, supported and maintained by London, a war that he never managed to reduce, with the notable exception of the pacification action undertaken by Suchet in Aragon. If it is true that the Spanish campaign could be considered as the tomb of the great army, it is to the predatory behaviour of its generals that Napoleon owes it.

- An ambition based on real and recognized qualities remains legitimate, but even if it is not forced, the same can be said of the condemned.

PERSUASION AND CREDIBILITY

Already perceptible at a time when armies were national and based on conscription, the imperative to persuade one's subordinate is even more evident in the current coalition context. It is illusory to try to free oneself from the sensitivities linked to the preservation of respective national interests through a single formal discipline based on the diffusion of orders. In order to be recognized, the leader will have to ensure that the subordinate/"coalition partner" will be willing to consider the order received as perfectly legitimate. For this reason, multinational command will always use persuasion through a deep conviction that the leader will be able to share.

Foch is credited with the aphorism of Sarraïl, quoted above. The fact remains that Foch, as Supreme Allied Commander in 1918, always advocated persuasion as the sole method of command, which, it is true, was hardly in keeping with his character!

"The single command, especially when it must be exercised over leaders of another nation, of another race, cannot be imposed by decree. The only one who imposes it is the man charged with exercising it, acting through his ascendancy on those with whom he must collaborate...: When command is exercised over allied armies, dry, imperative, categorical orders would produce no results. It is necessary that the one who gives them should know how to make them fully accepted by the one to whom they are addressed, that he should obtain his confidence, his adhesion. There is no other way for him to command (...). When armies fight together, it is absolutely impossible to achieve unity of command other than through this moral influence. In other words, it is not coercion that acts, but only persuasion.

For what is the use of giving orders when for all kinds of material and moral reasons they cannot be carried out? Men, especially foreigners, must be taken as they are and not as we would like them to be."

In Recoully

Foch's memorial. (Paris 1929. Les éditions de France. Pages 15 to 24)

Beyond this capacity to persuade, the credibility of the leader must be preserved by a fair balance between the formalism of the rank held and the recognized competence. This hierarchical formality is accentuated in a multinational framework, particularly within NATO, where the relative weight of a nation is directly linked to the rank of its highest representative.

DISCERNEMENT

If it is so true that discernment is an individual disposition of the mind to judge things clearly and soundly, the leader must first of all keep his own capacities for reflection, analysis and judgment as whole as possible. He remains lucid, does not allow himself to be overworked, filters the amount of information he needs, delegates wisely, and preserves his physical and moral form.

He does not fall into the trap of focusing, keeps the necessary distance from the immediate event at all times. Therein lies the second expression of discernment: a true leader does not conform on principle to the opinions of others. He retains and flexibly displays his free capacity for judgment, even if he initially opposes the common or majority opinion, because he has his own objective elements of appreciation. Discernment in this case is in keeping with the ability to convince. Of course, this disposition of mind should not be confused with obstinacy or intellectual isolation.

Thus, having launched the 2nd D.I.M. in the assault on Mount Majo from the Garigliano on 13 May 1944, without artillery preparation to ensure the effect of surprise, and having noted that

the failure of the attack, Juin re-launched the attack the following day after a powerful artillery preparation, after having taken the advice of all the battalion commanders concerned, all of whom had expressed themselves in this way. It was a success.

In 1917, having devised a new offensive which was to take place on the Chemin des Dames between Soissons and Reims, General Nivelle refused to admit that the German withdrawal from the Péronne salient towards the Hindenburg Line, risked calling into question the effects which were expected of it. When the first reports from Franchet d'Espèrey reached him, he even exclaimed:

"this withdrawal is impossible!

Franchet d'Espèrey is wrong".

SERENITY

In addition to these qualities, and in situations of tension, the leader must strive to "calm" his entourage and his subordinates. They can then give the best of themselves without being under pressure from the operational situation or even from the higher echelons. As much an absorber of anxiety as a diffuser of serenity, he must therefore help to reduce the stress in the environment and restore as far as possible a calm, serene and soothed attitude. Not only does it protect itself and preserve the discernment mentioned above, but it makes itself credible to its interlocutors and gives strength to its decisions.

The balance of command systems is only second to balance and security. The balance of command systems is second only to the balance and security that the leader must achieve in an overloaded "agenda" in order to avoid overheating. In his style, General Juin had quite succeeded in this when he commanded the CEFI in 1943/44.

"During the whole month of April (1944), at his headquarters in Santa Arunca, in tents and trailers, General Juin's staff worked in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. As early as 7 o'clock in the morning, a report brought together the heads of office around the 'Boss', then each one worked on his own. Juin calls this or that person in his caravan to ask for information. Commander Pedron, from the 3rd office, enters more often than the others, he has a privileged role, having worked for the General for a long time.

He understands him half-word and knows better than anyone else how to interpret his thoughts and translate them into writing. The mood is cheerful, the comrades, liaison officers of the various large units are very surrounded. In the evening, after dinner, Juin organizes a bridge game, it is his relaxation. He gave as a standing order: "If nothing serious happens, let me sleep."

Colonel Pujo

June, Marshal of France. (Paris 1988. Albin Michel. Page 187)

Depending on the situation he is confronted with, the context and environment in which he is acting, and his own personality, the chef will highlight all or some of these qualities at a given moment. However, these qualities must constitute the "backbone" of the leader's character, regardless of the phase of the manoeuvre under consideration and the mode of command chosen.

For this reason, since character is determined and not predestined, it is important that the moral and intellectual training of future leaders emphasize these qualities from initial training to higher military education.

Title :	RFT 3.2 Tome 2 (FT-05)
Author (s) :	RFT 3.2 Tome 2 (FT-05)
Release date	13/11/2018
