



## Humility

Command exercise

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### HUMILITY... WHAT?

**Humility is a fundamental virtue of the military profession and especially of leadership. It contributes to discernment and thus encourages us to approach the complexity of the profession of arms without arrogance or pride. It implies a permanent taking into account of the data of reality. Humility leads to detachment from public recognition, which should not be confused with indifference. In no way does it cancel out the joy of collective and individual success. Rather, this quality is a form of restraint, a mark of respect that avoids lying to oneself and deluding others. It should lead the leader to seek the success of the group rather than his own. Humility must thus make it possible to distinguish between order and reason, between personal interest and that of the community, and finally to judge if necessary between the reason of the State and the reason of humanity.**

### HUMILITY... WHY?

- It avoids making hasty judgments. It is a guarantee of progress, because it invites you to bequestion.
- Proof of character, it can be detected by the ability of the leader to step out of the limelight, in order to better invest himself in the mission.
- It testifies to the chief's awareness that he is the custodian and not the owner of the authority entrusted to him.
- It is a form of communicative serenity which, far from neutralizing the desire to win, allows a unit to achieve a performance without seeking glory.
- In combat, it allows the leader not to underestimate his opponent.

### **NO HUMILITY ... WITHOUT :**

- sense of reality;
- recoil;
- lucidity;
- ability to listen;
- sense of service;
- open-mindedness.

### **HUMILITY ... IN THE TEXTS :**

"In front of the work to be done, he must remain modest. By his submission to the data of reality, at all times he must remember that the leader, however great he may be, is never the rule of the world's life, but is only the rule of the world's life.... Without humility, strength is only violence; only humility makes it possible to lessen the risks of diminishing shortcomings, to recognize and repair faults. »

Gaston Courtois - *L'Art d'être chef* (1958).

"True strength is that which is guessed, which is discreet so as not to crush. Humility is a culture that makes lasting results prevail over passing glory. »

Daniel Hervouët - *Leading Men to Success* (2014).

"Humility is the counterpoise to pride. "Voltaire

"Prefer the good that doesn't make noise to the noise that doesn't do any good. In this way one can pass the flame of one's heart into the heart of one's subordinates. In this way one obtains their devotion. "Admiral of PENFENTENYO

### **HUMILITY... "IN TOUCH."**

Testimony of a sergeant group leader - Bosnia - 2002:

"The platoon is deployed in a small rural village of a minority to participate in a civil-military action: to rebuild the well and repair stone drinking troughs for sheep. We have to improvise, we have materials, but I have no skills in masonry. I know that one of the corporals in the battle group was trained as a mason before joining. So I'm asking him to become a site foreman. The whole group, including the chief, follows his instructions to the letter during all the work... The work is completed on time and we are congratulated by the command and the villagers' recognition. This success was shared by the entire detachment, but the platoon leader rightly attributed the credit to our "builder corporal". »

Testimony of a Lieutenant platoon leader - Operation TRIDENT - Kosovo - 2000:

"For the past few weeks, I have been commanding a lighting platoon, detached from my home regiment, within the French battalion for the duration of the mission. As a young officer with little experience, my only reference in projection is a short mission in Africa,

within my squadron. In a very degraded security context, within an unknown battalion and with permanent responsibility for the acquisition of intelligence on a rather vast urban sector, the pressure is strong. Without any real retreat in my command style, launched into a race for operational performance while the platoon is manoeuvring perfectly, I bring this pressure down on all my subordinates. One evening, after I had unjustly insulted him on the radio in the afternoon, a sergeant asked for an interview during which his words opened my eyes: I understand that in an operational situation, we all win together, that trust is not just theoretical but must be a lived reality. This Sergeant's lucid frankness made me think. The platoon goes through the rest of the mission without any worries, thanks to the quality of the men who make up the platoon. The humility of the leader is cultivated in contact with reality, and with subordinates who, with the necessary forms, are capable of telling a superior what deserves to be told in the service of the common good and the success of the mission. »

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