

MY LEADER

*There are those who do not know and do not know that they do not know.
They are fools and should be shot.*

*There are those who do not know and know that they do not know.
They are students and should be taught*

*There are those who know but do not know that they know.
They are poets and should be read.*

*There are those who know and know that they know.
They are leaders and should be followed.
-A loosely translated old Asian proverb-*

I am a patriot. I am a staunch patriot. I cannot think of anyone who is more of a patriot than me. I am aware of the famous quote by Samuel Johnson, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." I am not a scoundrel and my patriotism is surely not blind. My sentiments are due to the fact that I am a citizen of the most advanced nation in the world. There is no poverty here. Everyone's material, medical, physical and psychological needs are fulfilled at very little cost to the individuals involved. There is equal justice for all, although crime is extremely rare and more often due to the criminal's treatable mental aberration. I am a journalist who has travelled extensively and witnessed the appalling goings on in most other nations. It bears repeating. I am a patriot.

This all came about because of the benevolent philosophy of our government and especially its Leader, my Leader. The heart and soul of our government is 'Our Leader'. That is as he is always identified and how we refer to him. I doubt if anyone actually knows his real name. We have been made aware that all our benefits are due to his rulings, his powers of persuasion, the strength of his orations and his ability to coerce his foes when necessary. Poems, essays, lengthy dissertations, novels, theses, movies have all portrayed him in an extraordinary laudable fashion. Somehow, we all identify with him and try to emulate him as much as possible.

He receives nearly as much praise from abroad as he does at home. He is regarded as a World Leader that has never before been emulated. He wields the carrot/stick approach and it works. I am not familiar with all the subtleties involved when dealing with foreign governments, but he seems to know how and when to convince them to be as friendly as possible. We are, after all, by many orders of magnitude, technologically the most advanced nation in the world. I suspect that we closely monitor all our potential enemies by means that they cannot appreciate. We are probably aware of what nefarious actions they are going to take before they do. Also, we use some of our technologies as a tool of trade.

As for national security, once again he has mastered its necessities. Immigration is tightly regulated. Visitors are monitored and must depart when their time as guests here

is up. Anybody who attempts to launch missiles at us will have those items returned with devastating results.

As for his personal life, he is the soul of discretion. We know that he has been married to the same woman for a number of years. They have children. We do not know who his wife is and how many and who their children are. This all has to do with measures to protect him and his family. We have never been able to identify his close friends or whether he has any. We are not allowed access into his home and while we know that he has visitors we have no way of knowing who they are. He does not appear to have any sort of social life.

I have a reputation as a top notch journalist and investigative reporter. I started to doubt my abilities vis-a-vis the latter after I had a couple of drinks with a good friend who is a very capable correspondent for a foreign newspaper. He started by apologizing for what he was about to assert.

"I do not understand your non-critical approach to your government and especially to your 'Leader'. You are an investigative reporter of note. A major role of journalism in a democracy is to hold the government accountable. This is something that you and yours have been singularly remiss about. It matters not that your regime has accomplished some very remarkable achievements. It is the fundamental responsibility of your media to ask how it was done and whether there were any ulterior motives. If something is, 'too good to be true', then it is usually too good to be true'. All I am suggesting is that you do your job."

My initial reaction to my friend's censure was anger. However, after a brief period, my professional instincts took over and I became frightfully aware of my shortcomings. I had fallen prey to all the hype, making me a fanatic devotee of our government and 'MY Leader'. I immediately resolved to investigate our government and our 'Leader' as vigorously as possible. It was rather easy to discern that not one of my confreres had ever had a face-to-face encounter with him. Further, no one in the administration ever admitted to such a get-together. It did not take too long before officialdom became aware of my activities. While I was never seriously hampered, I found that information was simply not forthcoming. Everyone I interviewed either did not know or, on the grounds of security, would not reveal anything. As a last resort, I let it be known that I intended to write and publish my suspicions. This administration was supposed to be transparent. It was anything but. Why was it hiding behind a cloak of secrecy?

This brought about an unexpected response. I was summoned to the office of our Leader's supposed chief advisor. He commenced as follows.

"While we know that you are simply doing your job, you have become a major nuisance. While we have draconian means to silence you, it has been decided that I should inform you of all I know. It is not complete since there are certain bits and pieces that even I am not privy to.

First of all let me categorically state that 'Our Leader' is nothing more than a fiction. He simply does not exist. He is a creation of a group of personages who had nothing but the best interests of our country, the world and all of humanity in mind. It all started about twenty-five years ago. At an international conference that was attended by the brightest of minds, a small group of them were seated at the same dinner table. They immediately

discovered a kinship based upon interchanges that were most enjoyable and stimulating. Since they no longer had any reason to boost their ego, no one-upmanship occurred. Mutual respect was the order of the day. They also decided to have such get-togethers on a regular basis and did. I do not definitely know who these personages were although I have my suspicions. No one knew anything about these meetings. They were deliberately kept secret because the participants did not want to be encumbered by the press. The sessions were not always attended by the same authorities.

At perhaps the fourth or fifth session one of the attendees made the following proposal.

‘We are all very well established and we are having a ball at these reunions. Is it not high time we discussed what our collective brain power and means can do to enhance the condition of our world and all the living creatures it contains? We are supposed to be amongst the most intelligent and benevolent persons alive. Why not use what we have to attempt to do just that?’

The suggestion met with instant and unanimous approval. They also agreed that the first order of business was to find a way to eliminate the barriers between the various religious, ethnic and racial groupings. One suggestion that was made and quickly discarded, but not completely, was to use fear arising from a menace to all of humanity. This approach had actually been posited in a Science Fiction story dating back quite a number of years. It remained as a possibility for future consideration. However, the consensus was that fear would be harmful, especially in the long term.

Something positive was absolutely crucial. What was essential was an indispensable modern Messiah that all would follow without question; someone that would be imbued with tremendous intelligence, political savvy, a gift of superb oratorical proficiency, good looks and charm, charisma and an apparent benevolent character. They also realized that finding such a person was an impossible task. Again one of the participants came up with a solution. ‘Let us create our modern Messiah. We have the technology. It should not be too difficult.’

And so ‘Our Leader’ came into the contemporary scene as a total figment of the collective imagination of a group of fabulous savants. Of course, all the policies and tactics used originated with them. It would appear they have been inordinately successful. However their task is far from complete. Much of the world still remains mired in poverty, environmental degradation, undemocratic political machinations, corruption, superstition, horrible educational practices, and non-existent health care. Some progress has been made, but there is still a long way to go.

You now know the important parts of this remarkable history. You know as much as I do. I do not know who these savants are. They are the only ones who know about them. You must be wondering why I told you all this. You must realize that if you repeat any of this to anyone, you will be severely dealt with. We are appointing you Press Secretary. Primarily, your job will be to maintain and enhance the fiction of ‘Our Leader,’ especially with those other journalistic sceptics. Good Luck!”

The threat was evident. This is most frustrating. I am a renowned journalist sitting on one of the most important stories ever and I cannot recount it to the public. It may drive me crazy.

