



Commanding Means Serving. The Creed of an Old Soldier

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People outside the barracks often confuse command with power. They imagine mahogany desks, orders issued with arrogance, and the privilege of rank.

Let me tell you something, after forty years spent getting my boots dirty in the mud of hot war zones: **command is not a privilege; it is a sentence of responsibility.**

It is a cruel paradox: to be a true commander, you must be willing to serve every one of your men to the very end.

If you do not understand that, you chose the wrong profession.

The lesson of Alexander the Great: Water is not meant to be drunk alone

I have seen too many "armchair" officers forget the lesson of Alexander the Great. In the Gedrosian Desert, Alexander did not merely claim to be a leader; he proved it. When they

handed him that helmet full of water, he was not putting on a show. He was sealing a blood pact. By pouring that water into the sand, he told his men: "*My fate is yours*".

That is the essence of command. If your men do not eat, neither do you. If they are under fire, you cannot remain under cover. The chain of command disappears in times of need, and if you have built your unit on dignity, that bond becomes tempered steel.

The four pillars on which I built my life

I have no interest in manuals written by those who have never heard the whistle of a bullet. For those who have seen war, military ethics are simple and brutal:

1. **Integrity:** Your word is the law. If you lie, if there is no consistency between what you order and what you do, you have lost command. Trust cannot be ordered; it is earned by example.
2. **Duty:** The homeland and the mission come before your ego, before your career and, if necessary, before your own skin.
3. **Humanity:** War is dirty, but it is not authorization to become beasts. The commander must be the guardian of human dignity, even when the world around him seems to have gone mad.
4. **Total Responsibility:** This is the part that keeps you awake at night. If the operation fails, it is the commander's fault. Period. If it succeeds, the credit belongs to the soldiers. Anyone who shifts blame onto subordinates is not a leader; he is a coward.

In the barracks: The real training

In peacetime, many lose their bearings. I have always believed that peacetime is when the men who will be saved in war are forged.

- **Discipline:** It is not punishment for the sake of cruelty. It is the language of instinctive action. If, in a moment of chaos, a soldier does not think but reacts, it is because you taught him to. And as far as I am concerned, if I have to humiliate a man with a public dressing-down, I have failed as an instructor. A well-motivated, well-trained man does not make mistakes.

- **Welfare:** A commander who allows his men to sleep in unfit barracks or who does not care about their families does not deserve command. A soldier will give you his life in battle only if he knows that, in peacetime, you fought for his dignity.
- **Meritocracy:** I was never afraid to surround myself with people better than me. My pride was seeing my officers surpass me. If you are a leader, the success of those you have mentored is your only true medal.

Under fire: When the fog swallows everything

In war, everything you learned from books vanishes. Only solitude remains. When the radios go down, when chaos is total and your men look you in the eye for an answer, you are alone.

- **Risk:** Every order you give can become a name on a headstone. That is why every decision must be calculated, never driven by vanity. You do not waste your men's lives for personal prestige.
- **Presence:** I never sent anyone where I would not go first myself. Being there, on the front line, is not movie-style heroism; it means showing your men that we are navigating the same storm. If we die, we die together.

Command, ultimately, is not an exact science. There is no equation that tells you how to deal with pain or fear. It is an art learned through blood, time, and a conscience that must remain clear, despite everything.

Command is a burden. But I would not have carried any other.