



Can leaders be trained?

Some will say that leaders are born, not made, and that you can't make a leader by teaching or training.

I don't agree with this entirely. While it is true that some men have within themselves the instincts and qualities of leadership in a much greater degree than others, and some men will never have the character to make leaders.

I believe that leadership can be developed by training in the military sphere; I reckon that soldiers will be more likely to follow a leader in whose military knowledge they have confidence, rather than a man with much greater personality but with not the same obvious knowledge of the job.

To the junior leader himself the mere fact of responsibility brings courage, the mere fact that by his position as the recognised head of a group of men he is responsible for their lives and comfort, gives him less time to think of his own fears and so brings him a greater degree of resolution than if he were not the leader.

I know I found this to be the case myself in 1914, when as a young Lieutenant I commanded a platoon and had to lead them in charges against entrenched Germans, or undertake patrol activities in no-man's land.

By the training I had received from my superiors in peacetime, I gained confidence in my ability to deal with any situation likely to confront a young officer of my rank in war. This increased my morale and my powers of leading my platoon, and later my company.

In other words, it is almost true to say that leaders are 'made', rather than born. Many men who are not natural leaders may have some small spark of the qualities which are needed. This spark must be looked for, and then developed and brought on by training.

But except in the armed forces this training is not given. In civilian circles it seems to be considered that leadership descends on men like dew from heaven, it does not.

There are principles of leadership just as there are principles of war, and these have to be studied.

Field Marshall Viscount Montgomery

