

TO LOSE POWER OVER POWER

to Dictate, to be Dictated, to be a Dictator

A correspondence

Eef Veldkamp 2014

My once dearest friend,

As you know, my reign has drastically come to a stop. Time has been brutal to me and has given you and our people the wings of Icarus. I have never expected from you, especially you, to do this. My great wisdom has made me a donkey in a lion's skin; I was ignorant and now the Cornucopi of Almathea, which drenched our county in abundance, has been stolen by Hermes. I have been imprisoned, not in a prison but in a system – as all of you now are. My will has lost its power but my words still have their meaning; you're making a big mistake, so please listen to me, this is my last testimony.

My father once told me, many years before my reign, that our people wanted and needed him; people themselves are incapable of living civilized lives without someone, someone with the divine knowledge and morality, to steer and guide them, he said. They wanted, needed and loved my dad, and therefore, my father said, he kept them from 'becoming barbaric beasts'; he had freed them from the oppression of democracy.

I have always enjoyed a wonderful youth, the palace was fun and there always was plenty, plenty of everything. The guards brought me friends to play with while their parents were with my dad in the basement, I didn't know why, back in the day I thought that to be the place grown-ups wanted to be. Only years later I finally asked what they were doing in the basement, I asked if he was secretly smoking cigars with them because I knew my mother didn't like it when he was smoking. My father laughed disapprovingly and told me that only the equipment to cut the tips of cigars was in the basement.

I didn't believe or understand him but I didn't care enough either to keep questioning him further, mostly because he didn't like when he was questioned. My Father could get really angry when he was questioned. Of course I was naïve, but my naivety has always served me well.

Back in the day, my friends and I were always accompanied by guards, my father told me, in my ignorance, that he just didn't want me to feel alone. Sometimes that felt a little weird, but as a kid you don't mind as long as you can play. And we usually did that in our garden, and as you know, in our country it's always warm, so we could play all year long. We had a great view at the front of the garden, close to our marble collection of statues of Greek philosophers and gods. From there we could watch over almost the whole capital, and with our kid like stupidity and fantasy we loved to play as if we were those Greek gods, ruling over our world – great practice.

Oh, I had such a calm and peaceful youth. Sometimes there were loud noises coming from so far that I couldn't hear what they were, but my dad had always reassured me that it was the thunder of Zeus, ruling over its people, giving those the destiny they deserved for not obeying his law. As a kid it never came up to me that this was a two-sided story.

I had these teachers; old men, quite boring they were – I thought at the time. They were teaching me in the garden, by the statues, all kinds of things. Mostly about politics, philosophy but also about ruling and image – they said “it would be very helpful when one day I would be the supreme leader.”

One teacher took me to the town every now and then, of course in secrecy, my dad would have never allowed. We sat on the square close to the big fountain with my dad’s statue on it – one day mine would be there. We watched our people living their normal day life – oh some were stupid, they were dressed in these ugly old clothes – they had no smartphones, at least they didn’t look at them as regularly as I did. My teacher told me about their lives – as far as he could know. We also went to the market, the big one which had market stalls as far as the eye could see – ‘our economy is flourishing, you see, young prince’ he would always, always say. Occasionally we had one of our very rare talks with one of the merchants, mostly about what they were selling or just small talk.

The people seemed quite happy, they could do whatever they wanted if they just obeyed the law. Safety was very important, my teacher would say, ‘it’s one of the cornerstones of the freedom our people enjoy’ – our police wore these black uniforms with gold lining. On a sunny day you could see them sparkle in every corner of your eye. They had this arsenal of weapons on their belt; guns, tasers and gummy sticks – again my teacher would say ‘it makes the people feel more safe’ – ‘all the crimes committed here are solved!’ - he would proudly added.

Of course our country had everything a man could want; we had McDonalds, big fashion stores, libraries, hotels, journalism, oil, art – name it, we had it. My dad closely guarded and controlled the quality of most, what was necessary because ‘otherwise all this crap flows into our country, endangering the welfare of our people’.

I was twenty-seven when my father’s health declined; he was dying. One day, another warm day, he called me by his bed. He looked as if death had already swallowed half of him; white and weak, but his voice still had its known piercing, deep sound. ‘stand on my shoulders, son, touch the god’s, lift our people to heaven’ – he had learned me everything I needed to know - And my days as leader had begun.

You see, I am a visionary; I am the moral guidance of our people. I had to learn how to steer my people to greatness – a great task. As leader I had many encounters with my people, I had to, how could I otherwise lead them. The most important thing I learned is that people must be steered. One cannot live in a society when there are no clear boundaries. I decided that our people needed schooling, otherwise they couldn’t play a part in the circle of economics, and otherwise they would be plain stupid – unable fulfill their most basic needs. You see how generous I am, through my laws I tried to filter out all noise. Like dumb comedies from other countries, or pornography. I’d try to make place for things that really counted, as family, tradition or the country. To run a country one has to filter out the bad ones, I had to cleanse. But I had many good people by my side, as you once were, who

helped me. You see, this was not a one-man job.

As the days passed I have build factories, I have build hospitals, I served the people. Once in a while I had to punish some, that's true, but it was for the better of us all. I have taken the responsibility of the people onto myself. You see, no one can live as an autonomous individual. Everyone would only serve his or her own interests. I had to be there, as long as possible, to make our country function on long term. It's not that the quantity of voices counts, but their weight.

Our people were happy, as I once was. How could you betray me? Why did you make all our people go to hell? You democrats proclaim that freedom is a basic human right. You made everyone slave of his own freedom, you see. I gave the people everything they needed, and now you stole that from them.

Regards,

Your supreme leader

My majesty,

How stupid is it that I still not dare to call you by your normal name. Our people just call me by my name, and I want them to. I won't apologize; the focus is now on the 'we' and not on the 'I'. Your reign has suppressed us for long enough. You say we have acquired the wings of Icarus, I'd rather suggests you have finally been eaten by Hades. But I do value your honesty; you have been a donkey in lion's skin.

I sincerely do not understand how you want me to react. Do you want me to transfer the power the people finally have back to you? I know you are stupid, but not that stupid. I will tell about my experience of my youth maybe it will relativize your thoughts.

While you were learning and playing with your friends, who by the way weren't your friends but the sons and daughters of the people your dad was torturing. I was learning at school, not about economy, mathematics, history and biology but about you and your ideas. After school I had to work for my parents, because your regime didn't help any of the normal people, you just stole from us. From all the crops we sold, almost half of the gainings we had to give to your regime. We had to work and work to only be able to prevent starvation. And for what? to update the palace with the newest defensive tech? To increase police presence on the streets? You always knew the consequences of your actions, that's why you were so afraid, and that's why you introduced all these defensive measures.

You say that the people were happy; maybe they were graceful for the fact that they were not dead, as many of their relatives. I once came home, if you could have called it a home, completely ransacked, my mother crying in the kitchen. When she saw me, she moved her head away from me and ordered me to go to my room and do my homework. I was so confused, the next days I wasn't able to go to school; my mother said we'd had to lay low. But I didn't have to be bored we had to rebuild our house.

My father was gone for weeks, not a clue why I had. I remember seeing you on the fifth day my father was missing. It's ignorant to think nobody knew who you were, people were just too afraid to address you. You were with this old man; he wore a suit and gold rings on almost every finger his hands counted. Though I was afraid, I was intimidated to. I wanted that too, our people wanted that too.

My father had returned after almost two weeks, he did not speak, he'd just continued working. Years later, when your father finally had passed away, there was a feeling of relief, surrounding everyone. We'd hope that you would do things differently. We all had to participate in the mourning. A smile could get you arrested that day.

The first thing I remember you doing was giving every single soul of our nation 'one' dollar, a sign of appreciation. I was sublimated but I was young too, now I understand that this was to win souls, to keep them silent. The next day taxes went up and then there came the statue, replacing the one of your father.

Oh, that gigantic statue of you on the big square. There were people stupid enough to praise it, there were people that thought you was their supreme messiah. I wonder if they did this out of fear or if they'd really believe in you. I have to admit; your bad behavior and reign has led us to the point we had to revolt, your terrible leadership has mobilized us. Democratic leaders are no gods; we are one of the people. We're just chosen because people feel connected and equivalent. And instead of gods, I know that if I don't do my job well, I will be gone one day. That's why I'll even try to do my job better.

The police you associate with safety just made us afraid, and I think you know that. People didn't dare to say anything that wasn't allowed; it was impossible for us to improve our lives. You didn't have many laws, but you did have the ones that prevented us from improving our lives.

Why were beards forbidden? We couldn't navigate anywhere because almost every street bore your name. Importing goods was almost impossible; resulting in houses with no roof tiles because we didn't have the right clay in our country. And why should pornography be so dangerous? In our new enlightened – democratic – country people can almost literally do what they want, they can decide their own path and destiny. If people need roof tiles they can import them. If people want, they can watch pornography.

Speaking of pornography. How can you forbid pornography while mistresses literally constantly surrounded you? Not in the sense of two or three but one for every day of the year. Why do you deserve that? Why do you deserve to lead a county on your own, enforcing all the people to live by your standards while you didn't live by these standards yourself?

You propagandized our people into recourses. You say we had journalism; we did. But it was far from something as free journalism. Now we are giving people objective factual news, giving them a chance to formulate their own ideas. When you count all the individual independent voices, I as a leader get a chance to formulate what really matters according to the public.

As for the factories you've build they mostly kept us working so that we could generate money. And the hospitals did nothing more than keep us alive to be able to work. You only did the absolute minimum to keep us alive, anything as wellbeing or welfare isn't something for the people by your book.

Well I hope to have relativized your thought, though my hopes aren't too high. I know we believe in different things, but beliefs can change. I dare you to see how our people are now more liberated than any time before.

Regards,

Your former friend

In response,

How does 'we' differ from 'I', you are not the people just as I wasn't either. At least I clearly admit that I wasn't the people and I could never be. There should be a distinct gap between a leader and the people, you see, when your standing between your people you can't see the whole. A leader has to be able to place himself above the other. This is the core of every political system we know, there's the herder and the sheep. I was humble enough to take on this task as herder. You should not be an ennobled sheep.

You say I am stupid, but you have led me lead you and our people for many years. My rule has even learned you so well that you even accomplished to revolt against me. Did you know that many rebellions eventually lead to yet another oppressor? Are you and your pathetic system those new oppressors? It is true that in my schooling program people didn't learn all theoretical sciences, but they're not everything. I did teach people how to take care of themselves, how crops are grown, how trade works, I learned our people about morality and philosophies, and yes, about myself. A leader should be an example, a motivation for the people. In your system you teach our people about things of secondary importance. First one needs the basis, then one can expand to theoretical sciences.

You and your people shouldn't have been so dependent on me, your leader. You see, this is the typical problem with people, especially in democracy. While under my reign you at least have to try to better your life yourself. Now all the people that voted on you expect you to better their lives. And to be able to do that you have to punish the people that didn't vote for you. This makes people lazy and punishes the one's that didn't do anything wrong. It makes everyone an object of the state; instead of self-motivated subjects everyone will become so dependent and will grant all their responsibility on you. This will be your end, and this will be the end of democracy, I tell you.

Do you know why I had your father taken? Has he ever dared to tell you? Your father had betrayed some people from the resistance which were planning an armed attack targeting the palace. He was afraid that too many civilians would be killed, so he informed the guards – a noble gesture. While he has done me a great service in the sense that he protected my reign, he did betray. And if something is worse than killing, it's betraying. You see, instead of my father I have always appreciated honesty, I didn't like those sneaky games. That's why I'd always administered very clear laws. You may disagree with them - but you do have the same laws in your democracy. The only difference is that they are formulated in a very different way. I also wonder why democracy has always come with violence. Every democratic revolution, except for India's, was violent. Maybe this violence is inherent to democracy because once part of a democracy there's no way to sublimate your aggression, so you have to force it on something outside your democracy.

In my regime people at least had the opportunity to take their destiny into their own hands, yes they had to work, yes they had to obey but at least they had

something to fight for, I mobilized and activated the people. Your system just fulfills their needs and forces the people to stay calm and paralyzed. My people had to give everything they had to survive while in your democracy they don't have to do anything to survive, you know, you make our people lazy.

Democracy is a group thing, though you talk about it as a collection of individuals. In my regime people were nothing on their own and the thing that bonded them was I, just as a god. It has worked, even in these godless times; People need someone to look up to. In democracy everyone one looks up to himself. The other is your savior but also your biggest enemy – there's no form of communal trust. Democracy is one endless compromise.

I wonder why police in your democracy is busier giving people tickets than catching real criminals? Is everyone in democracy a potential criminal and therefore to be punished for things that they will never or haven't yet committed? I've been watching, compared to my reign there are no significant changes in deaths due to traffic.

One thing democracy has done better than any other form of government, even better than I did in my reign is that there's no way to escape it. You're part of it, as I am now. My prosecution is coming very close now; I face being imprisoned, but now in a real prison. I will be forbidden to participate in any political activity. My mind will be forced to numb while my body degenerates into a bag of bones, which I will have to use for self-flagellation, but even then I will be a leader, not of a nation, but of myself.

I congratulate you with your victory, although it will be one of short duration. Soon your people are going to expect you to better their lives, give them jobs, food and housing. While to do so you also have to steal from them. You will have to compromise every policy and thought that will eventually degenerate into porridge of laws and rules that will swallow you and your people, instead of you and the people swallowing it, worse, It will grow and harden to a big lump that's impossible to swallow. Your people will expire into laziness and cowardice while almost choking in the uneatable porridge you feed them, living in complete discontent with the responsibility they have lost over their own lives. Like babies that have to be taken care over by parents.

Always,

Your Supreme Leader