DECLARE WAR ON YOUR ENEMIES

THE POLARITY STRATEGY

Life is endless battle and conflict, and you cannot fight effectively unless you can identify your enemies. People are subtle and evasive, disguising their intentions, pretending to be on your side. You need clarity. Learn to smoke out your enemies, to spot them by the signs and patterns that reveal hostility. Then, once you have them in your sights, inwardly declare war. As the opposite poles of a magnet create motion, your enemies--your opposites--can fill you with purpose and direction. As people who stand in your way, who represent what you loathe, people to react against, they are a source of energy. Do not be naive: with some enemies there can be no compromise, no middle ground.

> *Then* [*Xenophon*] *got up, and first called together the under-officers of Proxenos. When they were collected he said: "Gentlemen, I cannot sleep and I don't think you can; and I can't lie here when I see what a plight we are in. It is clear that the enemy did not show us open war until they thought they had everything well prepared; and no-one among us takes the pains to make the best possible resistance. "Yet if we give way, and fall into the king's power, what do we expect our fate will be? When his own half-brother was dead, the man cut off his head and cut off his hand and stuck them up on a pole. We have no-one to plead for us, and we marched here to make the king a slave or to kill him if we could, and what do you think our fate will be? Would he not go to all extremes of torture to make the whole world afraid of making war on him? Why, we must do anything to keep out of his power! While the truce lasted, I never ceased pitying ourselves, I never ceased congratulating the king and his army. What a vast country I saw, how large, what endless provisions, what crowds of servants, how many cattle and sheep, what gold, what raiment! But when I thought of these our soldiers--we had no share in all these good things unless we bought them, and few had anything left to buy with; and to procure anything without buying was debarred by our oaths. While I reasoned like this, I sometimes feared the truce more than the war now. "However, now they have broken the truce, there is an end both to their insolence and to our suspicion. There lie all these good things before us, prizes for whichever side prove the better men; the gods are the judges of the*

contest, and they will be with us, naturally.... "When you have appointed as many commanders as are wanted, assemble all the other soldiers and encourage them; that will be just what they want now. Perhaps you have noticed yourselves how crestfallen they were when they came into camp, how crestfallen they went on guard; in such a state I don't know what you could do with them.... But if someone could turn their minds from wondering what will happen to them, and make them wonder what they could do, they will be much more cheerful. You know, I am sure, that not numbers or strength brings victory in war; but whichever army goes into battle stronger in soul, their enemies generally cannot withstand them."

ANABASIS: THE MARCH UP COUNTRY, XENOPHON, 430?-355? B.C.

THE INNER ENEMY

In the spring of 401 B.C., Xenophon, a thirty-year-old country gentleman who lived outside Athens, received an intriguing invitation: a friend was recruiting Greek soldiers to fight as mercenaries for Cyrus, brother of the Persian king Ataxerxes, and asked him to go along. The request was somewhat unusual: the Greeks and the Persians had long been bitter enemies. Some eighty years earlier, in fact, Persia had tried to conquer Greece. But the Greeks, renowned fighters, had begun to offer their services to the highest bidder, and within the Persian Empire there were rebellious cities that Cyrus wanted to punish. Greek mercenaries would be the perfect reinforcements in his large army.

Xenophon was not a soldier. In fact, he had led a coddled life, raising dogs and horses, traveling into Athens to talk philosophy with his good friend Socrates, living off his inheritance. He wanted adventure, though, and here he had a chance to meet the great Cyrus, learn war, see Persia. Perhaps when it was all over, he would write a book. He would go not as a mercenary (he was too wealthy for that) but as a philosopher and historian. After consulting the oracle at Delphi, he accepted the invitation.

Some 10,000 Greek soldiers joined Cyrus's punitive expedition. The mercenaries were a motley crew from all over Greece, there for the money and the adventure. They had a good time of it for a while, but a few months into the job, after leading them deep into Persia, Cyrus admitted his true purpose: he was marching on Babylon, mounting a civil war to unseat his brother and make himself king. Unhappy to be deceived, the Greeks argued and complained, but Cyrus offered them more money, and that quieted them.

The armies of Cyrus and Ataxerxes met on the plains of Cunaxa, not far from Babylon. Early in the battle, Cyrus was killed, putting a quick end to the war. Now the Greeks' position was suddenly precarious: having fought on the wrong side of a civil war, they were far from home and surrounded by hostile Persians. They were soon told, however, that Ataxerxes had no quarrel with them. His only desire was that they leave Persia as quickly as possible. He even sent them an envoy, the Persian commander Tissaphernes, to provision them and escort them back to Greece. And so, guided by Tissaphernes and the Persian army, the mercenaries began the long trek home--some fifteen hundred miles.

A few days into the march, the Greeks had new fears: their supplies from the Persians were insufficient, and the route that Tissaphernes had chosen for them was problematic. Could they trust these Persians? They started to argue among themselves.

The Greek commander Clearchus expressed his soldiers' concerns to Tissaphernes, who was sympathetic: Clearchus should bring his captains to a meeting at a neutral site, the Greeks would voice their grievances, and the two sides would come to an understanding. Clearchus agreed and appeared the next day with his officers at the appointed time and place--where, however, a large contingent of Persians surrounded and arrested them. They were beheaded that same day.

One man managed to escape and warn the Greeks of the Persian treachery. That evening the Greek camp was a desolate place. Some men argued and accused; others slumped drunk to the ground. A few considered flight, but with their leaders dead, they felt doomed.

That night Xenophon, who had stayed mostly on the sidelines during the expedition, had a dream: a lightning bolt from Zeus set fire to his father's house. He woke up in a sweat. It suddenly struck him: death was staring the Greeks in the face, yet they lay around moaning, despairing, arguing. The problem was in their heads. Fighting for money rather than for a purpose or cause, unable to distinguish between friend and foe, they had gotten lost. The barrier between them and home was not rivers or mountains or the Persian army but their own muddled state of mind. Xenophon didn't want to die in this disgraceful way. He was no military man, but he knew philosophy and the way men think, and he believed that if the Greeks concentrated on the enemies who wanted to kill them, they would become alert and creative. If they focused on the vile treachery of the Persians, they would grow angry, and their anger would motivate them. They had to stop being confused mercenaries and go back to being Greeks, the polar opposite of the faithless Persians. What they needed was clarity and direction.

Xenophon decided to be Zeus's lightning bolt, waking the men up and

illuminating their way. He called a meeting of all the surviving officers and stated his plan: We will declare war without parley on the Persians--no more thoughts of bargaining or debate. We will waste no more time on argument or accusation among ourselves; every ounce of our energy will be spent on the Persians. We will be as inventive and inspired as our ancestors at Marathon, who fought off a vastly larger Persian army. We will burn our wagons, live off the land, move fast. We will not for one second lay down our arms or forget the dangers around us. It is us or them, life or death, good or evil. Should any man try to confuse us with clever talk or with vague ideas of appeasement, we will declare him too stupid and cowardly to be on our side and we will drive him away. Let the Persians make us merciless. We must be consumed with one idea: getting home alive.

The officers knew that Xenophon was right. The next day a Persian officer came to see them, offering to act as an ambassador between them and Ataxerxes; following Xenophon's counsel, he was quickly and rudely driven away. It was now war and nothing else.

Roused to action, the Greeks elected leaders, Xenophon among them, and began the march home. Forced to depend on their wits, they quickly learned to adapt to the terrain, to avoid battle, to move at night. They successfully eluded the Persians, beating them to a key mountain pass and moving through it before they could be caught. Although many enemy tribes still lay between them and Greece, the dreaded Persian army was now behind them. It took several years, but almost all of them returned to Greece alive.

> *Political thought and political instinct prove themselves theoretically and practically in the ability to distinguish friend and enemy. The high points of politics are simultaneously the moments in which the enemy is, in concrete clarity, recognized as the enemy.*
>
> CARL SCHMITT, 1888-1985

Interpretation

Life is battle and struggle, and you will constantly find yourself facing bad situations, destructive relationships, dangerous engagements. How you confront these difficulties will determine your fate. As Xenophon said, your obstacles are not rivers or mountains or other people; your obstacle is yourself. If you feel lost and confused, if you lose your sense of direction, if you cannot tell the difference between friend and foe, you have only yourself to blame.

Think of yourself as always about to go into battle. Everything depends on your frame of mind and on how you look at the world. A shift of perspective can

transform you from a passive and confused mercenary into a motivated and creative fighter.

We are defined by our relationship to other people. As children we develop an identity by differentiating ourselves from others, even to the point of pushing them away, rejecting them, rebelling. The more clearly you recognize who you do *not* want to be, then, the clearer your sense of identity and purpose will be. Without a sense of that polarity, without an enemy to react against, you are as lost as the Greek mercenaries. Duped by other people's treachery, you hesitate at the fatal moment and descend into whining and argument.

Focus on an enemy. It can be someone who blocks your path or sabotages you, whether subtly or obviously; it can be someone who has hurt you or someone who has fought you unfairly; it can be a value or an idea that you loathe and that you see in an individual or group. It can be an abstraction: stupidity, smugness, vulgar materialism. Do not listen to people who say that the distinction between friend and enemy is primitive and passe. They are just disguising their fear of conflict behind a front of false warmth. They are trying to push you off course, to infect you with the vagueness that inflicts them. Once you feel clear and motivated, you will have space for true friendship and true compromise. Your enemy is the polar star that guides you. Given that direction, you can enter battle.

He that is not with me is against me.

--Luke 11:23

THE OUTER ENEMY

In the early 1970s, the British political system had settled into a comfortable pattern: the Labour Party would win an election, and then, the next time around, the Conservatives would win. Back and forth the power went, all fairly genteel and civilized. In fact, the two parties had come to resemble one another. But when the Conservatives lost in 1974, some of them had had enough. Wanting to shake things up, they proposed Margaret Thatcher as their leader. The party was divided that year, and Thatcher took advantage of the split and won the nomination.

> *I am by nature warlike. To attack is among my instincts. To be able to be an enemy, to be an enemy--that presupposes a strong nature, it is in any event a condition of every strong nature. It needs resistances, consequently it* seeks *resistances.... The strength of one who attacks has in the opposition he needs a kind of gauge; every growth reveals itself in the seeking out of a powerful*

opponent--or problem: for a philosopher who is warlike also challenges problems to a duel. The undertaking is to master, not *any resistances that happen to present themselves, but those against which one has to bring all one's strength, suppleness and mastery of weapons--to master* equal *opponents.*

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, 1844-1900

No one had ever seen a politician quite like Thatcher. A woman in a world run by men, she was also proudly middle class--the daughter of a grocer--in the traditional party of the aristocracy. Her clothes were prim, more like a housewife's than a politician's. She had not been a player in the Conservative Party; in fact, she was on its right-wing fringes. Most striking of all was her style: where other politicians were smooth and conciliatory, she confronted her opponents, attacking them directly. She had an appetite for battle.

Most politicians saw Thatcher's election as a fluke and didn't expect her to last. And in her first few years leading the party, when Labour was in power, she did little to change their opinion. She railed against the socialist system, which in her mind had choked all initiative and was largely responsible for the decline of the British economy. She criticized the Soviet Union at a time of detente. Then, in the winter of 1978-79, several public-sector unions decided to strike. Thatcher went on the warpath, linking the strikes to the Labour Party and Prime Minister James Callaghan. This was bold, divisive talk, good for making the evening news--but not for winning elections. You had to be gentle with the voters, reassure them, not frighten them. At least that was the conventional wisdom.

In 1979 the Labour Party called a general election. Thatcher kept on the attack, categorizing the election as a crusade against socialism and as Great Britain's last chance to modernize. Callaghan was the epitome of the genteel politician, but Thatcher got under his skin. He had nothing but disdain for this housewife-turned-politician, and he returned her fire: he agreed that the election was a watershed, for if Thatcher won, she would send the economy into shock. The strategy seemed partly to work; Thatcher scared many voters, and the polls that tracked personal popularity showed that her numbers had fallen well below Callaghan's. At the same time, though, her rhetoric, and Callaghan's response to it, polarized the electorate, which could finally see a sharp difference between the parties. Dividing the public into left and right, she charged into the breach, sucking in attention and attracting the undecided. She won a sizable victory.

Thatcher had bowled over the voters, but now, as prime minister, she would have to moderate her tone, heal the wounds--according to the polls, at any rate, that was what the public wanted. But Thatcher as usual did the opposite,

enacting budget cuts that went even deeper than she had proposed during the campaign. As her policies played out, the economy did indeed go into shock, as Callaghan had said it would, and unemployment soared. Men in her own party, many of whom had by that point been resenting her treatment of them for years, began publicly to question her abilities. These men, whom she called the "wets," were the most respected members of the Conservative Party, and they were in a panic: she was leading the country into an economic disaster that they were afraid they would pay for with their careers. Thatcher's response was to purge them from her cabinet. She seemed bent on pushing everyone away; her legion of enemies was growing, her poll numbers slipping still lower. Surely the next election would be her last.

> [*Salvador Dali*] *had no time for those who did not agree with his principles, and took the war into the enemy camp by writing insulting letters to many of the friends he had made in the Residencia, calling them pigs. He happily compared himself to a clever bull avoiding the cowboys and generally had a great deal of fun stirring up and scandalizing almost every Catalan intellectual worthy of the name. Dali was beginning to burn his bridges with the zeal of an arsonist.... "We* [*Dali and the filmmaker Luis Bunuel*] *had resolved to send a poison pen letter to one of the great celebrities of Spain," Dali later told his biographer Alain Bosquet. "Our goal was pure subversion.... Both of us were strongly influenced by Nietzsche.... We hit upon two names: Manuel de Falla, the composer, and Juan Ramon Jimenez, the poet. We drew straws and Jimenez won.... So we composed a frenzied and nasty letter of incomparable violence and addressed it to Juan Ramon Jimenez. It read: 'Our Distinguished Friend: We believe it is our duty to inform you--disinterestedly--that your work is deeply repugnant to us because of its immorality, its hysteria, its arbitrary quality....' It caused Jimenez great pain...."*
>
> *THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY: A BIOGRAPHY OF DALI,* MEREDITH ETHERINGTON-SMITH, 1992

Then, in 1982, on the other side of the Atlantic, the military junta that ruled Argentina, needing a cause to distract the country from its many problems, invaded the Falkland Islands, a British possession to which, however, Argentina had a historical claim. The officers of the junta felt certain that the British would abandon these islands, barren and remote. But Thatcher did not hesitate: despite the distance--eight thousand miles--she sent a naval task force to the Falklands. Labour leaders attacked her for this pointless and costly war. Many in her own

party were terrified; if the attempt to retake the islands failed, the party would be ruined. Thatcher was more alone than ever. But much of the public now saw her qualities, which had seemed so irritating, in a new light: her obstinacy became courage, nobility. Compared to the dithering, pantywaisted, careerist men around her, Thatcher seemed resolute and confident.

The British successfully won back the Falklands, and Thatcher stood taller than ever. Suddenly the country's economic and social problems were forgotten. Thatcher now dominated the scene, and in the next two elections she crushed Labour.

Interpretation

Margaret Thatcher came to power as an outsider: a middle-class woman, a right-wing radical. The first instinct of most outsiders who attain power is to become insiders--life on the outside is hard--but in doing so they lose their identity, their difference, the thing that makes them stand out in the public eye. If Thatcher had become like the men around her, she would simply have been replaced by yet another man. Her instinct was to stay an outsider. In fact, she pushed being an outsider as far as it could go: she set herself up as one woman against an army of men.

At every step of the way, to give her the contrast she needed, Thatcher marked out an opponent: the socialists, the wets, the Argentineans. These enemies helped to define her image as determined, powerful, self-sacrificing. Thatcher was not seduced by popularity, which is ephemeral and superficial. Pundits might obsess over popularity numbers, but in the mind of the voter--which, for a politician, is the field of battle--a dominating presence has more pull than does likability. Let some of the public hate you; you cannot please everyone. Your enemies, those you stand sharply against, will help you to forge a support base that will not desert you. Do not crowd into the center, where everyone else is; there is no room to fight in a crowd. Polarize people, drive some of them away, and create a space for battle.

Everything in life conspires to push you into the center, and not just politically. The center is the realm of compromise. Getting along with other people is an important skill to have, but it comes with a danger: by always seeking the path of least resistance, the path of conciliation, you forget who you are, and you sink into the center with everyone else. Instead see yourself as a fighter, an outsider surrounded by enemies. Constant battle will keep you strong and alert. It will help to define what you believe in, both for yourself and for others. Do not worry about antagonizing people; without antagonism there is no battle, and without battle, there is no chance of victory. Do not be lured by the

need to be liked: better to be respected, even feared. Victory over your enemies will bring you a more lasting popularity.

> *The opposition of a member to an associate is no purely negative social factor, if only because such opposition is often the only means for making life with actually unbearable people at least possible. If we did not even have the power and the right to rebel against tyranny, arbitrariness, moodiness, tactlessness, we could not bear to have any relation to people from whose characters we thus suffer. We would feel pushed to take desperate steps--and these, indeed, would end the relation but do* not, *perhaps, constitute "conflict." Not only because of the fact that...oppression usually increases if it is suffered calmly and without protest, but also because opposition gives us inner satisfaction, distraction, relief...Our opposition makes us feel that we are not completely victims of the circumstances.*
>
> GEORG SIMMEL, 1858-1918

Don't depend on the enemy not coming; depend rather on being ready for him.

--*Sun-tzu,* The Art of War *(fourth century B.C.)*

KEYS TO WARFARE

We live in an era in which people are seldom directly hostile. The rules of engagement--social, political, military--have changed, and so must your notion of the enemy. An up-front enemy is rare now and is actually a blessing. People hardly ever attack you openly anymore, showing their intentions, their desire to destroy you; instead they are political and indirect. Although the world is more competitive than ever, outward aggression is discouraged, so people have learned to go underground, to attack unpredictably and craftily. Many use friendship as a way to mask aggressive desires: they come close to you to do more harm. (A friend knows best how to hurt you.) Or, without actually being friends, they offer assistance and alliance: they may seem supportive, but in the end they're advancing their own interests at your expense. Then there are those who master moral warfare, playing the victim, making you feel guilty for something unspecified you've done. The battlefield is full of these warriors, slippery, evasive, and clever.

Understand: the word "enemy"--from the Latin *inimicus*, "not a friend"--has been demonized and politicized. Your first task as a strategist is to widen your concept of the enemy, to include in that group those who are working against you, thwarting you, even in subtle ways. (Sometimes indifference and neglect

are better weapons than aggression, because you can't see the hostility they hide.) Without getting paranoid, you need to realize that there are people who wish you ill and operate indirectly. Identify them and you'll suddenly have room to maneuver. You can stand back and wait and see or you can take action, whether aggressive or just evasive, to avoid the worst. You can even work to turn this enemy into a friend. But whatever you do, do not be the naive victim. Do not find yourself constantly retreating, reacting to your enemies' maneuvers. Arm yourself with prudence, and never completely lay down your arms, not even for friends.

> *As one travels up any one of the large rivers* [*of Borneo*], *one meets with tribes that are successively more warlike. In the coast regions are peaceful communities which never fight save in self-defense, and then with but poor success, whereas in the central regions, where the rivers take their rise, are a number of extremely warlike tribes whose raids have been a constant source of terror to the communities settled in the lower reaches of the rivers.... It might be supposed that the peaceful coast people would be found to be superior in moral qualities to their more warlike neighbors, but the contrary is the case. In almost all respects the advantage lies with the warlike tribes. Their houses are better built, larger, and cleaner; their domestic morality is superior; they are physically stronger, are braver, and physically and mentally more active and in general are more trustworthy. But, above all, their social organization is firmer and more efficient because their respect for and obedience to their chiefs and their loyalty to their community are much greater; each man identifies himself with the whole community and accepts and loyally performs the social duties laid upon him.*
>
> WILLIAM MCDOUGALL, 1871-1938

People are usually good at hiding their hostility, but often they unconsciously give off signals showing that all is not what it seems. One of the closest friends and advisers of the Chinese Communist Party leader Mao Tse-tung was Lin Biao, a high-ranking member of the Politburo and possible successor to the chairman. In the late 1960s and early '70s, though, Mao detected a change in Lin: he had become effusively friendly. Everyone praised Mao, but Lin's praise was embarrassingly fervent. To Mao this meant that something was wrong. He watched Lin closely and decided that the man was plotting a takeover, or at the very least positioning himself for the top spot. And Mao was right: Lin was plotting busily. The point is not to mistrust all friendly gestures but to notice them. Register any change in the emotional temperature: unusual

chumminess, a new desire to exchange confidences, excessive praise of you to third parties, the desire for an alliance that may make more sense for the other person than for you. Trust your instincts: if someone's behavior seems suspicious, it probably is. It may turn out to be benign, but in the meantime it is best to be on your guard.

You can sit back and read the signs or you can actively work to uncover your enemies--beat the grass to startle the snakes, as the Chinese say. In the Bible we read of David's suspicion that his father-in-law, King Saul, secretly wanted him dead. How could David find out? He confided his suspicion to Saul's son Jonathan, his close friend. Jonathan refused to believe it, so David suggested a test. He was expected at court for a feast. He would not go; Jonathan would attend and pass along David's excuse, which would be adequate but not urgent. Sure enough, the excuse enraged Saul, who exclaimed, "Send at once and fetch him unto me--he deserves to die!"

David's test succeeded because it was ambiguous. His excuse for missing the feast could be read in more than one way: if Saul meant well toward David, he would have seen his son-in-law's absence as no more than selfish at worst, but because he secretly hated David, he saw it as effrontery, and it pushed him over the edge. Follow David's example: say or do something that can be read in more than one way, that may be superficially polite but that could also indicate a slight coolness on your part or be seen as a subtle insult. A friend may wonder but will let it pass. The secret enemy, though, will react with anger. Any strong emotion and you will know that there's something boiling under the surface.

Often the best way to get people to reveal themselves is to provoke tension and argument. The Hollywood producer Harry Cohn, president of Universal Pictures, frequently used this strategy to ferret out the real position of people in the studio who refused to show what side they were on: he would suddenly attack their work or take an extreme position, even an offensive one, in an argument. His provoked directors and writers would drop their usual caution and show their real beliefs.

Understand: people tend to be vague and slippery because it is safer than outwardly committing to something. If you are the boss, they will mimic your ideas. Their agreement is often pure courtiership. Get them emotional; people are usually more sincere when they argue. If you pick an argument with someone and he keeps on mimicking your ideas, you may be dealing with a chameleon, a particularly dangerous type. Beware of people who hide behind a facade of vague abstractions and impartiality: no one is impartial. A sharply worded question, an opinion designed to offend, will make them react and take sides.

Man exists only in so far as he is opposed.

GEORG HEGEL, 1770-1831

Sometimes it is better to take a less direct approach with your potential enemies--to be as subtle and conniving as they are. In 1519, Hernan Cortes arrived in Mexico with his band of adventurers. Among these five hundred men were some whose loyalty was dubious. Throughout the expedition, whenever any of Cortes's soldiers did something he saw as suspicious, he never got angry or accusatory. Instead he pretended to go along with them, accepting and approving what they had done. Thinking Cortes weak, or thinking he was on their side, they would take another step. Now he had what he wanted: a clear sign, to himself and others, that they were traitors. Now he could isolate and destroy them. Adopt the method of Cortes: if friends or followers whom you suspect of ulterior motives suggest something subtly hostile, or against your interests, or simply odd, avoid the temptation to react, to say no, to get angry, or even to ask questions. Go along, or seem to turn a blind eye: your enemies will soon go further, showing more of their hand. Now you have them in sight, and you can attack.

An enemy is often large and hard to pinpoint--an organization, or a person hidden behind some complicated network. What you want to do is take aim at one part of the group--a leader, a spokesman, a key member of the inner circle. That is how the activist Saul Alinsky tackled corporations and bureaucracies. In his 1960s campaign to desegregate Chicago's public-school system, he focused on the superintendent of schools, knowing full well that this man would try to shift the blame upward. By taking repeated hits at the superintendent, he was able to publicize his struggle, and it became impossible for the man to hide. Eventually those behind him had to come to his aid, exposing themselves in the process. Like Alinsky, never aim at a vague, abstract enemy. It is hard to drum up the emotions to fight such a bloodless battle, which in any case leaves your enemy invisible. Personalize the fight, eyeball to eyeball.

Danger is everywhere. There are always hostile people and destructive relationships. The only way to break out of a negative dynamic is to confront it. Repressing your anger, avoiding the person threatening you, always looking to conciliate--these common strategies spell ruin. Avoidance of conflict becomes a habit, and you lose the taste for battle. Feeling guilty is pointless; it is not your fault you have enemies. Feeling wronged or victimized is equally futile. In both cases you are looking inward, concentrating on yourself and your feelings. Instead of internalizing a bad situation, externalize it and face your enemy. It is the only way out.

The frequent hearing of my mistress reading the bible--for she often read aloud when her husband was absent--soon awakened my curiosity in respect to this mystery of reading, and roused in me the desire to learn. Having no fear of my kind mistress before my eyes, (she had given me no reason to fear,) I frankly asked her to teach me to read; and without hesitation, the dear woman began the task, and very soon, by her assistance, I was master of the alphabet, and could spell words of three or four letters...Master Hugh was amazed at the simplicity of his spouse, and, probably for the first time, he unfolded to her the true philosophy of slavery, and the peculiar rules necessary to be observed by masters and mistresses, in the management of their human chattels. Mr. Auld promptly forbade the continuance of her [*reading*] *instruction; telling her, in the first place, that the thing itself was unlawful; that it was also unsafe, and could only lead to mischief.... Mrs. Auld evidently felt the force of his remarks; and, like an obedient wife, began to shape her course in the direction indicated by her husband. The effect of his words, on me, was neither slight nor transitory. His iron sentences--cold and harsh--sunk deep into my heart, and stirred up not only my feelings into a sort of rebellion, but awakened within me a slumbering train of vital thought. It was a new and special revelation, dispelling a painful mystery, against which my youthful understanding had struggled, and struggled in vain, to wit: the white man's power to perpetuate the enslavement of the black man. "Very well," thought I; "knowledge unfits a child to be a slave." I instinctively assented to the proposition; and from that moment I understood the direct pathway from slavery to freedom. This was just what I needed; and got it at a time, and from a source, whence I least expected it.... Wise as Mr. Auld was, he evidently underrated my comprehension, and had little idea of the use to which I was capable of putting the impressive lesson he was giving to his wife.... That which he most loved I most hated; and the very determination which he expressed to keep me in ignorance, only rendered me the more resolute in seeking intelligence.*

MY BONDAGE AND MY FREEDOM, FREDERICK DOUGLASS, 1818-1895

The child psychologist Jean Piaget saw conflict as a critical part of mental development. Through battles with peers and then parents, children learn to adapt to the world and develop strategies for dealing with problems. Those children who seek to avoid conflict at all cost, or those who have overprotective parents, end up handicapped socially and mentally. The same is true of adults: it is through your battles with others that you learn what works, what doesn't, and

how to protect yourself. Instead of shrinking from the idea of having enemies, then, embrace it. Conflict is therapeutic.

Enemies bring many gifts. For one thing, they motivate you and focus your beliefs. The artist Salvador Dali found early on that there were many qualities he could not stand in people: conformity, romanticism, piety. At every stage of his life, he found someone he thought embodied these anti-ideals--an enemy to vent on. First it was the poet Federico Garcia Lorca, who wrote romantic poetry; then it was Andre Breton, the heavy-handed leader of the surrealist movement. Having such enemies to rebel against made Dali feel confident and inspired.

Enemies also give you a standard by which to judge yourself, both personally and socially. The samurai of Japan had no gauge of their excellence unless they fought the best swordsmen; it took Joe Frazier to make Muhammad Ali a truly great fighter. A tough opponent will bring out the best in you. And the bigger the opponent, the greater your reward, even in defeat. It is better to lose to a worthy opponent than to squash some harmless foe. You will gain sympathy and respect, building support for your next fight.

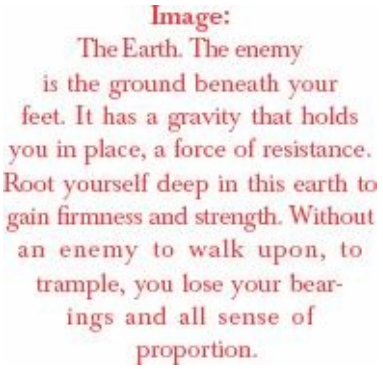
Being attacked is a sign that you are important enough to be a target. You should relish the attention and the chance to prove yourself. We all have aggressive impulses that we are forced to repress; an enemy supplies you with an outlet for these drives. At last you have someone on whom to unleash your aggression without feeling guilty.

Leaders have always found it useful to have an enemy at their gates in times of trouble, distracting the public from their difficulties. In using your enemies to rally your troops, polarize them as far as possible: they will fight the more fiercely when they feel a little hatred. So exaggerate the differences between you and the enemy--draw the lines clearly. Xenophon made no effort to be fair; he did not say that the Persians weren't really such a bad lot and had done much to advance civilization. He called them barbarians, the antithesis of the Greeks. He described their recent treachery and said they were an evil culture that could find no favor with the gods. And so it is with you: victory is your goal, not fairness and balance. Use the rhetoric of war to heighten the stakes and stimulate the spirit.

What you want in warfare is room to maneuver. Tight corners spell death. Having enemies gives you options. You can play them off against each other, make one a friend as a way of attacking the other, on and on. Without enemies you will not know how or where to maneuver, and you will lose a sense of your limits, of how far you can go. Early on, Julius Caesar identified Pompey as his enemy. Measuring his actions and calculating carefully, he did only those things that left him in a solid position in relation to Pompey. When war finally broke

out between the two men, Caesar was at his best. But once he defeated Pompey and had no more such rivals, he lost all sense of proportion--in fact, he fancied himself a god. His defeat of Pompey was his own undoing. Your enemies force on you a sense of realism and humility.

Remember: there are always people out there who are more aggressive, more devious, more ruthless than you are, and it is inevitable that some of them will cross your path. You will have a tendency to want to conciliate and compromise with them. The reason is that such types are often brilliant deceivers who see the strategic value in charm or in seeming to allow you plenty of space, but actually their desires have no limit, and they are simply trying to disarm you. With some people you have to harden yourself, to recognize that there is no middle ground, no hope of conciliation. For your opponent your desire to compromise is a weapon to use against you. Know these dangerous enemies by their past: look for quick power grabs, sudden rises in fortune, previous acts of treachery. Once you suspect you are dealing with a Napoleon, do not lay down your arms or entrust them to someone else. You are the last line of your own defense.



> **Authority: If you count on safety and do not think of danger, if you do not know enough to be wary when enemies arrive, this is called a sparrow nesting on a tent, a fish swimming in a cauldron--they won't last the day.**--*Chuko Liang (A.D. 181-234)*

REVERSAL

Always keep the search for and use of enemies under control. It is clarity you want, not paranoia. It is the downfall of many tyrants to see an enemy in everyone. They lose their grip on reality and become hopelessly embroiled in the emotions their paranoia churns up. By keeping an eye on possible enemies, you are simply being prudent and cautious. Keep your suspicions to yourself, so that if you're wrong, no one will know. Also, beware of polarizing people so completely that you cannot back off. Margaret Thatcher, usually brilliant at the

polarizing game, eventually lost control of it: she created too many enemies and kept repeating the same tactic, even in situations that called for retreat. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a master polarizer, always looking to draw a line between himself and his enemies. Once he had made that line clear enough, though, he backed off, which made him look like a conciliator, a man of peace who occasionally went to war. Even if that impression was false, it was the height of wisdom to create it.