

History Warns of Leadership Abuse

OKLAHOMANS still are stunned and perplexed over the misguided religious cult that ended with mass suicide in Guyana.

Reports indicate that the leader, the Rev. Jim Jones, was a personable individual who for years used his charisma for the benefit of his fellow men.

Then his leadership took a selfish turn beyond comprehension. It appears he not only became a victim of his own personal power and love for money, but that he also began using drugs heavily, no doubt further distorting his ability to reason.

Even so, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people remained loyal to him in the face of irrational abuse, arrogance, privation, loss of freedom, and confiscation of property.

What causes people to follow obviously misguided or selfish leadership to personal disasters?

One plausible explanation may be that vast numbers of people have feelings of insecurity and want to improve their spiritual or material circumstances. They are seeking a

"promising leader."

When competent leadership is provided by persons of high integrity and lofty ideals, the people benefit and progress results.

If such leadership is lacking, people may go after strong but selfish individuals who make extravagant promises they do not expect to keep. Such promises usually relate to actual needs and the leaders may espouse worthy causes, but without money, their promises are worthless and results suit their own aims.

History is filled with examples of such leadership. Perhaps none suits the case more precisely than Adolf Hitler, who headed a small band of Nazi dissenters to take over Germany and start a war.

Misguided or selfish leadership may arise in any field of human endeavor — politics, religion, law, science, education, business or industry, labor, health and social or welfare disciplines.

Americans properly mourn the fate of 912 people who died in the Guyana tragedy. Our greater and

continuing concern should be the possibility that a power-mad charismatic individual might win keys to the White House and cripple or destroy our nation.

We have had presidents who did not serve their country well, and others whose administrations were corrupt. This can happen.

An Associated Press story from Washington recently reported that "fashionable drugs" have become standard fare at parties attended by politicians and diplomats. For a long time Washington has consumed more liquor per capita than any other city.

So much power has become centralized in Washington that it could be extremely difficult to depose key people who might become addicted to drugs, alcohol or excessive ambition for power.

A junta of such persons in high offices, backed by a majority of the bureaucracy, could lead this country to loss of freedom and what might be described as "national suicide."