

Instauration!

CHAPTER I

The Presidential election of 2016 produced a result quite as disastrous as all sides had feared. The next few were, to put it mildly, worse. All the while national divisions increased and the general standard of living slowly declined, successive presidents flailed about, enacting ever more draconian regulations over a whole lot of things, and severely punishing those whom it was still in their power to punish for violating them. Overseas, the struggles in Europe and the Mideast continued unabated. How long things could have gone on in that fashion is anyone's guess. But then came the so-called "Second Great Depression."

Who can forget that horrible time, when being any kind of minority anywhere—white in black areas, black in white areas, and so on and on, was an invitation to abuse or death? Lynching of Gays and "homophobes," despatched in reaction to one another, depending upon what city or state one was in, were commonplace. Of innumerable atrocities that occurred then, two remain in my mind. One was the slaughter of a bunch of college students and their faculty "ally" in a so-called "safe space" by terrorists at a northeastern university. The other was the looting and burning of the mayor's residence of a major eastern city: Her Honour had egged on rioters against the police during a similar occurrence some years earlier. Now the same police stood by as the rioters did their work, laughing, whooping, and encouraging

the mob in its mayhem. I am sure that all of us who lived through this period have a few similar episodes tucked away in our heads.

Every day carried new horror stories, but the crescendo, as we all know, was reached on an early February morning. It had been a bad winter with large-scale starvation in certain areas. The president had ordered Federal troops to take control of New York City, a nation-wide state of emergency having already been declared. She had been acting irrationally for a few weeks, and one must suppose the pressure of a collapsing nation was too much for a woman who had not really had much experience in either the public or the private sector. In any case, in the privacy of the Oval Office, she shot the Vice President and the Secretaries of State and Defence, exclaiming that they were out to get her. Then there occurred one of the miraculous events that have convinced so many that this land of ours is divinely blessed. Rather than giving the president the nuclear football, which POTUS demanded after emptying her pistol into the supine body of the Secretary of Defence, the Secret Service agent who held that device ran. His track days at the University of Oklahoma had served him well. He ran out of the Oval Office, out of the White House, out of its grounds to his car. Then he drove to the Pentagon, and was able to force his way into the office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, to whom he delivered the lethal package and a breathless account of what had happened.

The Chairman rallied his brother Chiefs-of-Staff, and the Old Guard at the White House were duly notified and ordered to take charge of the president. After a scuffle with Secret Service agents, the soldiers found themselves in an unthinkable situation: a shootout with the president in the Oval Office. It did not last long, and to this day there is some question as to whether the president's death was suicide. In any case, a motorcade left the Pentagon for the White House, and the Chairman took charge there upon his arrival. By default, the United States had just

undergone their first (and so far, thankfully, their only) successful military *coup d'état*.

The death of the president hit the entire country like a massive stroke. Furiously the next few weeks sped by, as the Joint Chiefs used both the armed forces and federalised National Guards to impose order upon a nation that had been lurching drunkenly toward total collapse. Curfews with shoot-to-kill directives quickly imposed order upon the cities, and commandeered trucking lines ensured delivery and distribution of essential goods and services to stricken areas. For the moment, the United States were pacified.

The operative phrase, however, was “for the moment.” Unlike their colleagues in other countries, the hapless Joint Chiefs had no tradition of military government behind them. Even if one of the Chiefs had the stuff of a Franco, Peron, Pinochet, or even Cromwell, the country would not have tolerated it for long. The Chiefs themselves craved a civilian authority to surrender power to. But the Constitution had been shredded by their action, and even if there had been a sitting cabinet secretary to take the reins (and there were not, all save the murdered duo having resigned the day before the “Battle of the Oval Office,” as it has come to be known), they might well have faced arrest and perhaps execution for their deeds. Even so, it was only a matter of time before State and local authorities began to question the legitimacy of orders coming from Washington; any man the Chiefs might appoint president would obviously be illegitimate, but the calling of a presidential election under current conditions was unthinkable. The Pentagon truly had a tiger by its proverbial tail.

Now the Joint Chiefs were not really resolute men. They had humbly acquiesced as successive administrations had eaten away not merely at the Armed Forces’ material strength, but even unit cohesion. Signing off humbly on the order that had gender-integrated the SEALS, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs

had “taken full responsibility” for the bloodbath the abortive attempt to rescue the Greek president from the clutches of ISIS had resulted in. But somehow, that assumed responsibility had resulted in neither resignation nor firing. Nevertheless, each of them realised that their personal survival depended upon their taking firm action, and fortunately for them (and for us, to-day) the Army Chief of Staff was blessed with an imagination and a thorough grounding in Literature and History, both of which he had taught at West Point in days gone by.

As the Chiefs looked glumly at each other around the table in the White House’s Cabinet Office, discussing the formation of various alternative civilian authorities to surrender power to (and not be executed by), he said, “how about a Monarchy?”

His colleagues stared at him as though he were mad. But he then uttered those fateful words which are inscribed on the base of his monument at Arlington— “Anybody got a better idea?” Dead silence was the response, until his Naval counterpart asked, half-thinking it must be a joke, “who do we get for King?”

Of course, we all know the answer—Grand Duke Hans-Josef II of Lichtenburg. It seems obvious now, of course. But at the time, few Americans had ever heard of the Brooklyn-sized Grand Duchy in Central Europe. The vast majority of those who had known about the country only from *Call Me Madam*, the old biopic of Sally Miller, Truman’s ambassadress to the place. It seemed like an odd choice, but General Anderson had very good reasons for suggesting the youthful Grand Duke.

For one thing, while Lichtenburg was tiny, its Grand Duke was the wealthiest Monarch in Europe, with properties of all kinds throughout Central Europe (indeed, larger in total than the Grand Duchy itself). For another, he spoke English perfectly, and had served in the British Army—he had military experience. So far from being a figurehead, his father and grandfather had successfully faced down the country’s parliament, threatening to abdicate should a referendum to limit their powers

succeed—they won handily, at 76%. In a word, the Lichtenburgs had the skill of keeping their politicians in their place while working with them, and securing the affections of their people as well. Hans Josef had followed in their footsteps. He also shared his forebears' fascination with the United States (his grandfather had written a book—*Third Millennial Statecraft*—in which he analysed modern governance, and in particular the American government).

But the Grand Duke also had an appropriate pedigree. In the female line, he was the inheritor of the claims of the House of Stuart, not only to Great Britain and Ireland, but to the Thirteen Colonies as well. Moreover, he was descended from Louis XIV of France, who had presided over the settling of Quebec and Louisiana, and Charles III of Spain, founder of California and ruler of Florida, Texas, and the Southwest. As icing on the cake, he also descended from the Kings of Italy and Portugal, as well as a number of German, Czech, and Polish royals and noblemen, so there was widespread ethnic appeal too. A cousin of the Habsburgs also, he had married a glamorous Habsburg Archduchess. “He is FDR, JFK, and Reagan all rolled up into one!” the army chief assured his colleagues.

Indeed, no one had any better ideas at that juncture—and they were desperate, since every day that went by increased the chance of power slipping out of their hands and general collapse. As it happened, a cousin of the Grand Duchess lived in Washington, and was duly despatched to Lichtenburg with an official invitation. What the Grand Duke thought upon receiving it no one knows, since neither he nor any of his family have revealed his reaction up to the present. But he did accept, subject to three conditions: a) he must have full power, to include that of re-writing the Constitution (save, however, the Bill of Rights, which he would accept as sacrosanct); b) Congress must be convened and vote to accept him; c) immediately after this, all office holders at national, state, and local levels must swear

allegiance to him as King, his heirs and successors. After that, his reply stated, he would start to work. The Joint Chiefs immediately accepted the conditions, and a week after the idea had first been floated, Hans Josef and his Grand Duchess arrived at Andrews Air force base.

Corralling Congress and forcing Representatives and Senators to accede was found to be easier than the Chiefs had thought it would be. Some of the legislators were as motivated by the fear of national meltdown as were the military; others found threats to life and limb even more alluring than the blandishments of lobbyists had been. In either case, both houses meeting in a joint session unanimously endorsed both the invitation to the Grand Duke and the acceptance of his three conditions. The Speaker Pro Tem of the Senate announced in a slightly quizzical voice, "The motion carries. Hans-Josef of Lichtenburg is now our King!"

As had been pre-arranged, the Justices of the Supreme Court and the Joint Chiefs filed in and took their places in the House Chamber, as they would have done at the State of the Union Address in days gone by. But in lieu of the deceased or resigned cabinet, the Papal Nuncio, selected members of the Diplomatic Corps, and the heads of the larger religious denominations took those seats. Then, the Sergeant-at-Arms called out with a touch of a choke in his voice, "Mister Speaker, the... His Majesty, the King!"

Wearing the dress blues of a U.S. Army General, with his beautifully gowned Grand Duchess-turned-Queen on his arm, Hans-Josef slowly approached the Speaker's rostrum, accompanied by the Congressional Escort Committee. But there was no applause and no glad-handing, as there was in the days when presidents took this road. His wife took her seat, and our first King in almost three centuries mounted the rostrum. He cleared his throat, and in an Oxbridge-tinged voice began what

has gone down in history as the “First Speech from the Throne” —although there was no throne there present.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker Pro Tem, Members of Congress, Honoured Guests, and above all, My Fellow Americans:

This is not, in reality, a day of change. It is a day of reunion. A day of repairing bridges that were broken, of reconciling kindreds that were sundered, of undoing mistakes that were made. In 1607 your forebears named Jamestown after my ancestor, James I of England, and VI of Scotland—who had commissioned the version of the Bible that has played such a huge part in the culture of this great country of ours; in his name the Pilgrim Fathers concluded the Mayflower Compact. In 1629, the Carolinas were named for his son, Charles I, and in 1644, Maryland for Charles’ consort Queen Henriette Marie. In 1682 Louisiana was named for Louis XIV of France, likewise my forebear, as was Charles III of Spain, who ordered the founding of California. As with so many of you, I too was born and raised in a foreign land; but my roots in America are as deep as any and greater than most. We are, you and me, at last reunited.

The Declaration of Independence of 1776 was not against my ancestors, but rather, against that branch of our family that had usurped their place. You may recall, members of Congress, that your predecessors invited mine, King Charles III of happy memory— “Bonnie Prince Charlie” of song and story—to accept the Crown of America; an invitation that he, alas, did not feel able to accept. And so your predecessors went on to construct a Constitution that has served this Nation well for almost three hundred years. Unhappily, the time has come when that instrument, through the disinterest of the many and the malice of the few, has failed. It is for this reason that I have accepted the invitation once tendered and refused by my illustrious forebear. Not to destroy or efface all that has been done under the former regime, but to perfect it, so that together,

and invoking the blessings of Almighty God upon our work, we may together "form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

In the coming weeks and months I shall endeavour to propose a new Constitution, built firmly upon the best foundations of the old, to provide for these things in a manner more suited to the times in which we live. I shall also endeavour to visit as much of this our country as I may. To signify our new beginning together, I hereby take a new name and title, to bind myself ever closer to this land of ours. Henceforth, I shall be called James IV, King of the United States and of their Possessions, Grand Duke of Lichtenburg, in memory of my valiant forefather first mentioned; of James II, unjustly deprived of his rights by unnatural rebellion; and of James III, who struggled in exile for his people and his Crown. Henceforth also, my family shall be called Lichtenburg-Stuart.

I leave you now, to recall you at my pleasure when the labours of myself and those upon whom I shall call to assist me in the draughting of a new Constitution shall have concluded our labours, at which time I shall place it before you for your consideration. Until then, may God bless you all!

There was no cheering, and the Royal party departed as silently as they had entered. The Instauration was over, and the work of building had begun.