Purdue University

From the SelectedWorks of Peter J. Aschenbrenner

August, 2015

The Pasha’s ‘Declaration of Initiative’

Peter J. Aschenbrenner, Purdue University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/peter_aschenbrenner/286/
THE PASHA’S ‘DECLARATION OF INITIATIVE’
2 OCL 216
PETER J. ASCHENBRENNER
Department of History, Purdue University
paschenb@purdue.edu

ABSTRACT.
The Pasha has yet more, in this sixth article, to regret, and a Proclamation to his subjects in Far Far Away Sylvania seems in order. With the inestimable assistance of Grand Vizier, such a pronouncement is drafted. By sheer coincidence the text of this Proclamation matches, word for word, what we know as the Declaration of Rebellion, August 23, 1775.

KEY WORDS: Declaration of Initiative, Declaration of Rebellion.

A. INTRODUCTION. The Grand Vizier unrolls the fatal scroll.
   “Ahem,” he begins.
   “It is a beautiful day,” the Pasha remarks, “and perhaps too good a day to waste on political science.”
   “If we didn’t, others would surely be obliged to do so.”
   “No rest for the weary,” the Pasha waves the Vizier onwards.

   Whereas many of our subjects in divers parts of our Colonies and Plantations in [Far Far Away Sylvania] misled by dangerous and ill designing men, and forgetting the allegiance which they owe to the power that has protected and supported them; after various disorderly acts committed in disturbance of the publick peace, to the obstruction of lawful commerce, and to the oppression of our loyal subjects carrying on the same; have at length proceeded to –

B. LET ME STOP YOU RIGHT THERE, VIZIER. “This address concerns rebellion. Of course, this does not involve any nation in the vast empire for whose fortunes I or we, ahem, are responsible.”
   “Lemme see, here,” the Grand Vizier studies the seals annexed. “This is the Kingdom of Great Britain. Where the hell is that?”
   “No idea,” sighs the Pasha. “But surely they think they abide at the center of the universe. Let me guess. The emir of Great Britain –”
   “King,” the GV sotto voces the corrective.
   “Whatever,” the Pasha continues. “The King’s torked because there’s trouble in River City, and he wants to rebels declared traitors so that others may know that their omissions or commissions will be marked. Consequences assigned to their just desserts and all that.”
“Kinetically speaking,” the GV picks up the semantic baton, “if you help the rebels, you’re a rebel. And so forth.”
“But this is a rehash of the obvious,” the Pasha ponders.
“So much of governing is,” the GV allows.
“Does it have to be? Is it my job to tell others how to behave in circumstances in which it is frightfully clear how to act?”
“I rather thought that this was what government was all about.”

C. THE MOMENT OF TRUTH. OR CLOSE TO IT. “Edmund Burke said that government was a contrivance for human good.” The Pasha considers citing the underlying text for his quotation. But thinks again. “Whatever the hell the French Revolution was all about,” he continues, “it wasn’t about human good.”
“Perhaps a surfeit of same,” the GV sighs his counter-point, “was the point of contention.”
“And this idiot Proclamation continues on,” the Pasha growls, “with a lot of stuff and nonsense about how the King’s officers, civil and military, are to inform the King. ‘Who’s loyal, who’s not’. How’d I do?”
“It sounds better in the received pronunciation,” the Grand Vizier allows. “At least to those resident in New Jersey.”
“So what causes rebellions?” the Pasha asks. “Seriously? Do people really want my job?”
“This is why Mozart was invented. The dreamy middle movement of any piano concerto. By moving sideways you move,” the GV picks his words carefully, “forwards and backwards at the same time.”
“Was he an Austrian?” the Pasha wonders.
“Let me give you an example,” the GV poses the question. “Imagine that you told people to figure it out on their own.”
“Won’t they need freedom of speech?”
“They already have that, Highness,” the GV demurs. “Usually exercised only when your spies are absent or otherwise suborned.”
“Here’s my take on rebellions,” the Pasha considers the hints on offer. “First, everyone in this joint wants to know what I think on every subject. Of course, being a loud-mouth, I shoot off my lip to one and all.”
“Pleasing half the people half the time,” the GV computes. “And, presently, a quarter of the people a quarter of the time, and then –”
“Point taken,” the Pasha waives the Bernoullian paradise on offer.

D. A SURFEIT OF ALLEGIANCE. “I can’t get anyone out there to take a decision. Everything is referred to me and I am obliged to forward each sobbing plea to my ministers, who must engage wagon-loads of private secretaries, clarks and other liveried minions to keep track of the endless memorials and petitions, remonstrances and requests of my loyal but spineless subjects.”
The Pasha waives the interruption.
“And half the time, I cobble together, through my Ministry of Silly Walks [my name, don’t steal it] a thoughtful, well-reasoned answer and it turns out that the situation is overtaken by events or, waiting my reply, the locals have solved it themselves. And then I must say, ‘Oh I agree with your local solution,’ when I really want to say, ‘Why did you ask my opinion in the first place? Just take the initiative and solve local problems out there when they arise. In your [and here the Pasha emits and OCL omits an expletive] hinterlands! I’m not an answering machine!”

The Pasha groans his last remark.

E. THE PASHA SUGGESTS A CONSTITUTION. “You’re not saying what I think you’re saying,” the GV sidelong his glance. “I mean, if you’re saying what I think you’re saying then it’s curtains for totalitarianism.”

“Seriously,” the Pasha damns Joseph Stalin and others of his ilk. “Here’s what I say. Let’s write up something. Something about the form of organization of a state. Obviously it’s a partnership and as to the center and periphery each has something to contribute and something to gain.”

“Well said,” the GV puts in, but only as a matter of form as retirement is much on his mind.

“So we have a constitution,” the Pasha continues. “What’s that going to cost me? A thousand words?”

“Three thousand, four thousand,” the GV counters. “Words aren’t worth that much any more.”

“Fine. Four thousand or so. And get them to make their own damn decisions. Seriously what do I care? That’s my problem. I care too much.”

“It’s giving you gray hair, Majesty,” the GV intones.

“You know? Underneath my ‘Just for Pasha’s’?”

“You and me both, pal,” the Grand Vizier allows himself.

“They want someone to blame. This is my new insight. The divine right of kings! Crap! That’s all it is. Just crap! ‘The King can do no right!’ ”

“I believe it’s patentable, that is, with a ‘smiley face’.”

F. ALLOW ME TO SUM UP THE LAST THREE THOUSAND YEARS. “Con permesso,” the Pasha asides to his Grand Vizier. “I mean it always amuses me to see what the little people are up to.”

“Va bene,” the Grand Vizier sighs.

“It goes like this. Right now we operate under the king-is-always-responsible when anything goes wrong philosophy that is tagged to governments over-relying on Soviet-style command and control.”

“I assume this went out of fashion in the last millennium, as your highness would never take responsibility for what he cannot control.”

“Take Homer’s Iliad. Agamemnon thinks, before he gets to Troy, that he’s in charge. As soon as things start to go seriously wrong he learns that being in charge means you’re responsible for tomorrow’s disaster that you should have averted and
accountable for yesterday’s disaster, ditto. This is what makes Homer the world’s first political philosopher.”

“I’m amazed how this inspires you, sire.”

“I’m a megalomaniac, Grand Vizier. I’m not stupid.”

“Allow me to spin this out. You’re the boss, you will want better systems which are responsible, looking forward, for rules and decisions, and looking backwards, are accountable – at least in part – when things go bad.”

“You’re saying I’d rather be a successful authoritarian, even if I owe my success to the magic of systems, than a mangy old ruler who gets stuck with the blame when things go wrong as they surely must, as a matter of probability.”

G. STATUS. Complete.

H. Cross-Reference: See The Standard Model’s Eight Modules and How They Advanced the Eighteenth Century’s Agenda, 2 OCL 318–2; more Homer is there on offer.

I. CITATION FORMAT. Please cite as 2 Our Constitutional Logic 216 or 2 OCL 216.

J. SERVER LOCATION. This file is maintained on the I/D server.

K. LAST REVISED. This file was last revised on February 2, 2015; it is version 010.

L. FILE FORMAT. The format of this file is MS Word 2010; the format of the associated table is also MS Word 2010.