Bugging Ram: The Occupation of the President’s Orifice, October 15, 1971 – XIV

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SHORTLY forenoon Friday, October 15, 1971, a grim menagerie of the Corporation, the Faculty, the students, and the man in the suit was assembled in the lobby of Building Ten, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A dild of sorts was being displayed, including a clip in which a Midwestern university athlete, clad in a neon suit, illustrated the vigor imparted by the smoking of a particular brand of little cigars. Several cardboard boxes carried “Free Sample” signs, as did a young woman costumed as Miss America and labeled “King of a Special Brand of Little Cigars.” Several sweatsuits illustrated the vigor imparted by the smoking of the illusion, was still cherished by most of the faculty.

As students sampled the wares, the great hall, which also is known as the Richard MacArthur building and bears the name of MIT’s dead in two World Wars, badly filled with an oddly untobaccolike fragrance. The odor attracted several hundred people, who were visibly reduced by the smoke to a state of euphoric venerability. Hundreds of semi-inert, lobster bodies soon choked the corridor, blocking the main passage to some students who wished to reach their classes. Campus patrolmen who arrived on the scene were tickled down by the fumes as well, and soon lay among the students, unable to hear or respond to the frantic attempts of their superiors to contact them through their squawking, crackling call boxes.

As no one noticed the arrival at the institute of four persons wearing flight helmets and trekking through the men’s room, adding an image of MIT, but barely. The Corporation also sensed that the faculty had wrestled of the managers; they wanted an academic in the presidency.

In light of this desire to provide liberal patina, the choice of Weasel was a good one. Weasel, at least, had an academician’s stature (about 5’8”) and a respect among the students, that HoJo did not. Weasel was one of them in a way that HoJo, from the Slum School, could not possibly be. His election was duly announced, after a spurious search process designed to generate publicity and co-opt student inputs, and the Corporation decided to allow him free rein until his inauguration in October.

After that – they had a plan.

T H A T H A D BEEN an uncertain morning on Teakwood Row. HoJo’s then principal pseudopod, Constantine Simonides, had heard cackling laughter emanating from the men’s room opposite the office of the outgoing Corporation Chairman, John Killagin. Investigating, he discovered Dean for Student Affairs John D. Swinehart, Associate Provost Institute Gray, Faculty Chairman P.T. Martin and others, clustered around a conference table. HoJo, who presided, explained to the latecomings Simonides that the meeting was taking place in the men’s room because the President’s office had been bugged. Crabs deposited by rampaging hippies during the January occupation – a year previous had rendered the room unbearable.

The table contained a selection of wares from Copulation Hacking Associates of North Carolina. There were no active files in either President HoJo’s or Chairman Killagin’s offices. The swine were sticky; they had been used. Swinehart flushed them down the urinal while HoJo explained the purpose of the conclave.

Addledman, a few feet down the table, watched a curious expression on his face.

F O N March 5, 1971, the Corporation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology announced that it had selected then-president Jerome Weasel to be the next president of the Institute. He would fill the inimage of MIT, but

On this President’s Office, October 15, 1971, the Corporation had essentially prevailed in two years of student unrest and campus criticism, culminating in the obdurate picketing of the Instrumentation Laboratory by the November Action Coalition. The Corporation had loved HoJo well enough, but the selection of his successor was another matter.

Though the advice of the irrelevant intellectual had become in the late sixties an object of scorn by many students of the illusion of the university (the lie that students are free for four years to pursue truth; the illusion that the professor is anything other than a farmer raising fodder for American society to digest), the illusion was still cherished by most of the faculty. HoJo had managed to sustain the image of MIT, but

H O J O explained the purpose. Weasel, he had been given rein long enough. The Corporation wanted him under control, to delegate from the top management (for HoJo himself was, in a way, a figurehead) was soon to arrive. A diversion – the demonstration – had been arranged. No one would observe the team’s arrival. The only problem would be getting Weasel into the meeting. HoJo had decided to appeal to Weasel’s liberal patina; he wanted to dispatch P.T. Martin to Weasel’s office with a message summoning the newly-inaugurated president to a caucus that would endorse George McGovern for President of the United States. On the way, Martin would claim the need to relieve himself, and enter the men’s room, with Weasel in his wake.

P.T. said HoJo, of course you’ll do this. (HoJo cannot remember the incident). No, replied Martin, it was not appropriate that he do that. He had no need to relieve himself.

Swinehart volunteered to summon Weasel. He was about to leave when Addledman surged. The force of the blast blew out the grating, and Addledman rolled out of the duct, fell to the floor, and collapsed in a heap, cackling, “Coke. Coke.”

Simonides’ face fell. HoJo sat in it. There was a rather horrible silence. HoJo began to speak, then stopped. There was long a pause.

Here we have been talking with you students, HoJo finally said. Why have you gone off on your own and done something like this?

Coke, groaned Addledman.

Swinehart was sent off to locate twelve ounces of the life-giving liquid. Before giving it to Addledman the bureaucrats demanded he carry the message to Weasel, whose liberal pretense would surely not ignore a request tendered by a student. Addledman gulped.

Welcome to the big time, Waddly drawled.

T H E FACULTY knew nothing, as usual, and even if they had it would have made no difference.

At 3:30 pm the delegation carrying the pipe-like object ceased the hall to the men’s room. They were not observed. Inside the room their leader, a corpulent ex-vice presidential running mate of George Wallace who had once received the following placatory letter from HoJo:

I am of course deeply sorry that you have come to the conclusions you have expressed in your recent letter to me. I think that you would find that the loyalty of MIT to the country is at the same high level it has always been. You should be aware that the level of research and support of US government aims carried on at MIT is higher now than it was in its history… removed his helmet. General Kurt LeMing ordered his assistants to ready the ram.

Wesel, suspecting nothing, was already on his way with Addledman. He eagerly described his plans for educational reform and information processing.

The quality of life, he confided to Addledman, was an elusive factor. Only bit by bit, he said, could feeling love and reject it.

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