

# **HERMIT HERALD**

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### **QUOTE FOR THE DAY:**

**“That’s the world out there, little green apples and infectious diseases.” Ron DeLillo.**

### **THE UNINTENTIONAL ANTI VACCINATORS:**

**Because of Covid- 19 (CV), a major unintended consequence of people sheltering in place, is that infants and very young children are not receiving the usual battery of child hood vaccinations. In NYC from March 23 to May 9<sup>th</sup>, vaccinations for children under the age of two dropped by 63% compared to a year earlier, and for children over the age of two, the decrease was 91%. This, against the historical fact that 98% of New York City students are typically fully vaccinated. We’re talking serious stuff here – measles, chickenpox and polio.**

**Measles, which had been seemingly totally eradicated started coming back in the U.S. over the past several years due to the hard line anti vaccinators, but, now, with concerned parents not wanting to take their children to clinics or doctors' offices out of fear of the CV, the stage has been set for some serious problem in the future – perhaps as soon as this Fall.**

**Internationally, the picture is no better: Measles initiatives have been suspended in 27 countries and polio programs are on hold in 38. One of the most glaring examples is Nigeria, the largest (population wise) country in Africa where polio vaccination programs have been cancelled leaving 37.6 million children unimmunized.**

### **HONG KONG, “ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS”**

**I don't think so, not after Xi's proposed national security legislation. Using the rationale that the Hong Kong riots of last year were inspired by foreign countries, U.S included, Xi is going to impose strict limits on what may be done and said in Hong Kong. Interestingly, when Britain turned Hong Kong**

**over to China, it was agreed that Hong Kong could keep a great deal of autonomy, but that was not a “forever” deal; only promised until 2047. So, the new proposed security legislation; that’s all well and good – words written on a piece of paper, but what happens when the people of Hong Kong say, “We’re not going to let you restrict our liberties.” And, once again tens of thousands are protesting in the streets. Mr. Xi, are you really going to send in the People’s Liberation Army to enforce your paper words? Wow! I really doubt it.**

**First thing happens is that Hong Kong loses it’s favored country trade status with the U.S. and many other countries, followed by, or maybe preceded by, the exodus of many of the financial companies that make Hong Kong one of the most important financial hubs in the world. Then, there’s the image issue. China has been making the world feel warm and fuzzy over it’s massive, “Belt and Road” project, started in 2013, primarily infrastructure projects in many countries, with countries, in some instances, having to give up port facilities or other important assets, given their own financial straits.**

**All of this has been making China more and more of a “benefactor” (note the quotes), but really an influencer/ power broker in their client countries.**

**If China were to militarily step in to take control of Hong Kong, it would be right up there with Russia taking over Crimea, and would result in great international condemnation and the destruction of the Hong Kong economy.**

**Some point out that Hong Kong isn't that economically important to China anymore. Shortly after being taken back from the British in 1997, Hong Kong accounted for 20% of China's GDP. Today, it is less than 5%. That may be so, but there is much more at play here. Xi is incredibly image conscious, for himself and China. I believe a China takeover of Hong Kong would be a 1989 Tianamen Square times ten.**

**A personal side note here. I was one of the early non governmental Americans to go to China (1979). I was invited by the Chinese**

**government and treated like royalty for two weeks due to a friendship I had established with two high ranking Chinese officials in New York. To think that, back then, the tallest building on the Bund in Shanghai was only about eight stories – just look at the pictures today. My point is that I became very fond of the Chinese. They have done the most amazing things in just 40 years. I just hope they don't screw it up with Hong Kong.**

#### **HOW TO AVOID BEING DISMEMBERED:**

**Well, it seems with some good detective work, the Turkish officials were able to completely solve the case of what happened to poor Mr. Jamal Khashoggi. The finger prints of the conspirators go right up to the desk of Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto head of Saudi Arabia. With that sort of pressure, and with Mohammed, of course, denying everything, it became necessary to have a trial of all the bungling incompetents responsible for the murder. Boy those Saudi prosecutors are tough. Of the eight men who stood trial, three were given prison terms and five were**

**sentenced to be beheaded (nice tradition the Saudis have).**

**While the executioner was sharpening his sword, along comes Mr. Khashoggi's son, Salah, citing a verse from the Quran praising forgiveness and saying the family hoped to be rewarded by God for its good deed. Well, that was good enough for the Saudis – sentences reduced.**

**While Salah has three siblings, under Saudi law, it is only necessary for one family member to ask for leniency. Well, gosh, guess what? Turns out that Salah and his siblings were given tens of thousands of dollars and millions in real estate from the kingdom's rulers. I can only conjecture, at the meeting where Salah proposed forgiveness, that, anticipating the family might not be readily bought off, there was a bone saw in plain sight on an adjoining table.**

**AFGHANISTAN:**

**Once again a ray of hope out of the 18 year quagmire as the Taliban and Afghan**

**government agree to a cease fire over three days during the Eid al-Fitr celebrations at the end of Ramadan.**

**What makes this truce different is that the U.S. has apparently been able to convince the Afghan government to participate in a long delayed exchange of prisoners. 2,000 held by the Afghans are supposed to be released almost immediately. This, it is hoped, will lead to direct negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government.**

**President Trump wants all our remaining 12,000 troops out of Afghanistan by the end of the year, while his Generals are urging a slower schedule.**

**Crazy thing, the Brits, Soviets and the U.S. have been fighting losing causes in Afghanistan, for a hundred years. Most of the Mujahideen who we supported in their effort to oust the Russians are the new faces of our enemy, the Taliban.**

**I wrote about this more than a month ago, but while it's encouraging to see progress being**

**made, as I think everyone feels, “Enough already”, in terms of our involvement. In my mind, this is not going to end well for the Afghan government. The Taliban will give assurances, left, right and center, but once we are gone, it’s not a matter of if, but when, the Taliban take over the country.**

**AND FINALLY:**

**I go into CVS to develop some pictures. There are two viewing screens about four feet apart. There are signs on both screens saying these machines are shut down because social distancing cannot be maintained. I called the manager over to point out that if he only shut down one machine, the other could be used and social distancing would be preserved. He just looked at me. I could see the wheels going around, but he just didn’t get it.**

**Your faithful scribe,**

**PB**