

HERMIT HERALD

ISSUE 127

SEPT 4, 2021

QUOTE FOR THE DAY

**“Things are not always what they seem...”
Phaedrus, as written by Plato.**

THE TALIBAN, OUR IMPLACABLE ENEMY

So all is in a state of confusion in Afghanistan where many are terrified to leave their homes amidst spiraling gas and food prices. A leading cleric opposed to the Taliban has been detained and is photographed blind folded, while it is reported that the Taliban have executed an Afghan folk singer days after they decreed, “Music is forbidden in Islam.”

The last HH issue reported that the Taliban had come in possession of the U.S. Biometric database, which contains information on all who have cooperated with the U.S. If that isn't

bad enough, it turns out that the Afghan Defense Ministry and Interior Ministry were overrun so quickly that no records were destroyed – again, another trove of documents, payroll records, etc. of those Afghans who worked with the government. The terror felt by Afghan citizens is palpable, remembering the executions and brutality of the Taliban when they took over in the 90s.

But, notwithstanding the two actions described above, is that what the Taliban of 2021 are all about? It isn't, and it can't be because the Taliban desperately need most of the previous government workers to get back to work. The vast majority of the Taliban are poorly educated, gun slinging, religious zealots. The leaders, on the other hand, are better educated and fully recognize how hard it is going to be to rule a country of 38 million people. Two interesting things they have done, 1) they are giving blanket amnesty to all but a few of the supporters of the former government. And, 2) they have also promised that women can pursue higher education, but only in a fully segregated setting.

In short, the Taliban will definitely need support from the outside world to run their country, now referred to as The Islamic Emirate. Russia, China and Iran are already moving towards recognition of the new government as they have border security issues, which will require help from the Taliban to keep under control. And, not least, they see economic opportunities in Afghanistan's wealth of mineral deposits.

The big problem with the Taliban pronouncements about a gentler, kindlier Taliban is that many of the battle-hardened troops have not gotten the message. They are knocking on doors looking for Afghans who supported the U.S. In the Spin Boldak region they just executed 40 Afghans. The result is that Afghans who supported the U.S. are hiding in sheer terror.

Today's paper reports there are about 118,000 Afghans, including their family members who are qualified to come to the U.S. due to their having supported the U.S. How do you get them out safely? Will the Taliban give them safe passage to the airport for evacuation flights?

Our Afghan allies don't seem to think so. How about ransom money? What? We don't do that.

Here's the deal – we're sitting on \$9.5 Billion of Afghan money in the U.S. and the country is on the verge of a calamitous breakdown with no outside funding. Wouldn't you think the Taliban would make nice regarding our Afghan allies and ensure their safe departure in exchange for some or all of that \$9.5 billion?

Or, how about reverse ransom? The Taliban decree they've changed their mind about amnesty for all, and that they will be going after those who opposed them, except, except, for their willingness to release 15,000 at a time in exchange for a billion dollars at the culmination of each transaction.

OK, all pretty far fetched, but bottom line- the Taliban are going to need assistance, and it appears the U.S. may be their most important source for help. There are substantial reasons why they should want to assist in repatriating the few remaining Americans and sending 118,000 Afghans to new homes.

THE END OF NATION BUILDING

70% of Americans, including majorities from both political parties favored getting out of Afghanistan as the U.S. becomes increasingly non interventionist. But here's the crazy thing, "Record levels of Americans would back defending Taiwan from an attack by China." Crazy? Why crazy? A Pentagon report came out about a month ago. They ran 15 war- time models of our trying to militarily rescue Taiwan. We get absolutely creamed in every scenario. And, Mr. and Mrs. America want us to jump in? I don't think so.

But, other than Taiwan, Americans don't want to get into military conflicts. As Richard Haas of the Council of Foreign relations points out, "Abroad, the collapse of the Afghan government- coming on the heels of the Trump administration abandoning of Kurdish allies in Syria and the Obama administration's decision to wash its hands of involvement in Lybia may reinforce feelings that the U.S. can't be counted on in a crunch."

The bigger risk, according to former U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Mr. Daalder, “is that America’s adversaries will take advantage of what they perceive as an inward turn in the U.S.” Are we, as a country, really prepared to be, “sit on our hands” witnesses to another Uganda or Rwanda, the latter being one of president Clinton’s greatest regrets- that we did nothing.

And, just think – what are we going to do when Mr. Putin says, “I’ll take the rest of Ukraine now, thank you?” Oh, I know, we’ll yell and scream at the UN and throw on a bunch of new sanctions.

Your scribe is not a war mongering neo con, but not an isolationist either. The military is dangerous. They give you guns to shoot people with. It’s a dangerous profession that you volunteer for. How about law enforcement in the U.S.? We lost 264 this past year in line of duty killings.

Today’s arch anti interventionist attitude leads to a cynical coda; observing that the U.S. houses 28,500 troops in Korea where they play

war games twice a year, study Korean and play Mah Jong. In Germany, where we house 35,000, they play war games twice a year, study German and drink great beer. The highlight of West Point is the full dress parades on beautiful fall mornings followed by a football game at Mitchie Stadium. Is that tomorrow's military?

WOKENESS AND THE PATH TO MEDIOCRITY

Today, there's a woke channel for everyone. We have racial wokeness, gender wokeness, catch all wokeness and educational wokeness. Your scribe will get to all of these in coming issues, but today, let's update on educational wokeness.

You may recall, in issue 125 I noted that the Governor of Oregon has decreed that high school seniors will no longer have to demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing and math in order to graduate, stating that he had taken that action to benefit minorities, "who don't test well."

Well, almost, as if in competition with the west coast, New York City has upped the ante. The Department of Education has stated that academic honor rolls and class rankings must be scrapped because, “ they are harmful to some children.” What bullsh—t!- so are peanuts. Columnist Kyle Smith takes off on this so beautifully, “Erasing signifiers of excellence is an invitation to sloth and mediocrity. After 13 years these 18 year olds who have spent their lives having their feelings protected will be bounced out into a world where competition is suddenly how everything gets allocated and they’ll be as helpless as newborn chicks set lose in a forest of foxes.

Success Academy, a NY Charter School is a different deal. Smith points out. “Last year 100 percent of Success Academy’s graduating high school class (129 students) were accepted to college, 2/3 of them to selective colleges. Systemwide, the charter school’s student body is 94% people of color and 74% are from low income households. Since they are determined to do everything the opposite of Success Academy, the DOE schools should probably rebrand themselves as Failure Academy.”

What has your scribe written about so, so many times? All the excuses, finger pointing and blaming are stalking horses for the real problem. It's education, education, education, and America just can't put together the public educational system to do it. Is it the politics of the NEA, the teachers themselves, understaffing or poor teaching facilities? I really don't know. What is known is that the problem is not with the students. From whatever racial or economic background, with the example of Charter schools; good teachers, good facilities and required attendance, everyone thrives.

Kyle Smith closes his commentary by referring to the movie, "Caddyshack" where, in one scene, Judge Smail's, teenage caddy complains about the difficult challenge in going to college. The judge replies, "Well, the world needs ditch diggers too."

Your faithful scribe,

PB

