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THE PERFECT STORM

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4 August 2020

TRENDS ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT

U.S. MARKET FRONT

At 11 AM ET this morning, when clicking on “Gold” on *CNBC’s* website, this was the headline: “Gold edges back from record peak as firm U.S. data dims shine.”

CNBC went on to say, “Gold was little changed on Tuesday, hovering below the previous session’s record peak as fears over the pace of economic recovery amid surging coronavirus cases were offset by upbeat U.S. manufacturing data.”

The “firm U.S. data” was U.S. manufacturing activity hit a one-and-a-half-year high in July… and it also expanded across the euro zone for the first time since early 2019.

In fact, *CNBC* called it wrong. The manufacturing data had nothing to do with gold being “little changed.”

Today gold spiked $41.30, closing at $2,017.20… hitting a new record high and confirming Gerald Celente's forecast that gold prices would break $2,000 this year.

Silver followed gold, climbing 10 percent to close at $26.21 per ounce.

TREND FORECAST: *The global economy is at the onset of the greatest economic cataclysm in modern history.*

It has been destroyed by politicians across the globe in locking it down, reopening it in phases, locking it back down… and enforcing draconian regulations that have destroyed millions of businesses and tens of millions of lives.

Why are precious metal prices going higher, as we had forecast?

Because, as the cover of this Trends Journal illustrates – and Gregory Mannarino articulates in his column this week – governments and central banks, with their unprecedented money pumping schemes, have created "The Perfect Storm."

Thus, we maintain our forecast that when gold stabilizes above $2,000 per ounce, silver, now trading at $26.21, will sharply spike higher, moving above $40 per ounce.

TRENDPOST: *As we have made clear since we forecast "The Gold Bull Run" on 6 June 2019, the rise in gold prices was, and is, being driven by the reality that investors were seeking safe haven investments at a time when economies were in decline, unrest was sweeping the planet (see our 2020 Top Trend, "NEW WORLD DISORDER"), and central banks were lowering interest rates and flooding the globe with cheap money.*

We said it had nothing to do with demand for gold jewelry, which, had, at one time, helped raise gold prices.

During the first half of 2020, with businesses locked down and people out of work, gold jewelry demand is down 46 percent year-on-year to about half of its ten-year average, according to the World Gold Council.

They reported even demand for gold bars and coins was down 17 percent during the period to an 11-year low.

Central banks have bought 39 percent less gold so far this year, compared to the same period a year ago when banks bought a record amount.

From 1 January through June, gold bugs put their money into gold-backed exchange-traded funds (ETFs) in record volumes that topped even the best full-year investments of the past.

The value of gold-focused ETFs shot to $205.8 billion, well above the record set during 2012's second half in the midst of Europe's debt crisis.

Thus, it is clear that "investors" are convinced as the global economy worsens, currencies will be further devalued as government and central banks lower interest rates and pump in more money to artificially inflate failing systems.

SECOND QUARTER WORST FOR GROWTH, JOBS

During this year's second quarter, the U.S. economy contracted at a projected annual rate not seen even during the Great Depression.

The record 9.5-percent drop in productivity equates to annual plunge of 32.9 percent.

The cumulative loss during the first six months of this year is 14.75 percent, roughly the rate of economic slump seen in Russia in 1992, the year after the Soviet Union crumbled.

Consumer spending, which **comprises 70 of the U.S. GDP,** is the foundation of the U.S. economy. During the last quarter, spending on services retreated 43.5 percent; outlays for nondurable goods, such as groceries, was down 15.9 percent.

Spending on durable goods, such as cars and refrigerators, was off only 1.4 percent. It is suggested many consumers used their $1,200 federal stimulus checks to make big-ticket purchases that had been put off.

Underscoring the disaster, on 30 July, the U.S. labor department reported 1.43 million new claims for unemployment benefits, the 19th consecutive week new claims topped one million.

New claims rose in the last two weeks after falling for several. As of 18 July, 17 million Americans were collecting unemployment payments, even though employers added 7.3 million jobs during May and June.

That equates to 11.1 percent of the U.S. workforce collecting unemployment insurance.

With the media hysteria of "rising cases" and politicians re-locking down cities and states, we forecast the return of jobs has braked, especially in southern and western states.

At the same time, the $600 weekly federal unemployment benefit has expired along with the ban on evictions and foreclosures. During the week of 27 July, about 30 million Americans – almost one in every ten – reported lacking adequate food.

TRENDPOST: *Meanwhile, the stock market continues to rise, floating on the sea of artificially cheap money flowing from the Fed's tap.*

The Dow Jones Industrial Average has soared 42 percent since its mid-March low, oblivious to the country's worst economic performance in more than a century.

The stock market's frenzy has made the rich richer, helping billionaires boost their wealth by 80.6 percent from 2010 to the end of 2019. Since February, when the COVID panic reached the U.S., the stock market's relentless glee has given them an additional $565 billion.

FED HEAD PLAYS COVID CARDS

Repeating the mainstream Presstitute and political mantra, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell declared last Wednesday that besides pumping in more digital money backed by nothing and printed on nothing to inflate the economy… public vigilance, such as social distancing, is crucial to the speed of the economic recovery.

He added that even if millions of workers return to their jobs later this year, the recovery will have “a long tail,” during which millions more whose jobs depend on large gatherings in close proximity indoors will remain out of work.

“We have to… plan for the worst,” Powell said, adding the fate of the U.S. and world economies depend on the speed with which the COVID virus can be beaten back.

The Fed has used its arsenal of policy tools and has little more it can do to boost growth and employment, Powell noted.

“Fiscal policy” – adjusting tax rates and federal spending, the purview of Congress and the president – “can address things we” at the Fed “can’t,” he said.

Congress negotiating an additional $1 trillion in financial aid for the U.S. economy “is a good thing,” Powell said.

The Fed’s leaders made no changes to interest rates, policies, or programs at their meeting last week.

TREND FORECAST: *As we continue to note and as articulated over the months by Gregory Mannarino in his Trends Journal articles, the Federal Reserve and Washington will do all they can to keep equities artificially propped up.*

The more money pumped into the markets and economy, the lower the dollar will fall and the higher gold and silver prices will rise.

On the national front, it is estimated that the U.S. federal deficit, according to the Congressional Budget Office, will hit a peacetime record of nearly 18 percent of the GDP for 2020.

The dollar, which was up almost 33 percent from its July 2011 low, has fallen to a two-year low. We forecast it will continue to move sharply lower because of massive stimulus and monetary methadone injections to keep the Wall Street money junkies from crashing.

Again, among the implications, will be rising precious metal prices.

CORPORATE DEBT BOMB IS TICKING

With interest rates low and going lower over, U.S. businesses are $17 trillion in debt, which accounts for 79 percent of U.S. GDP.

As the economic recovery sags and equity markets rattle, we forecast a sharp rise in corporations defaulting on their debts, which will result in more businesses going bust and millions more filling up the unemployment lines.

Globally, corporations defaulted on bonds worth a face value of $94 billion during the global economic shutdown, with U.S. companies accounting for about $70 billion.

From January through June, 3,604 companies filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, a 26-percent increase year-on-year, according to Epiq, a legal services firm. “Tens of thousands” more are drifting toward insolvency.

TREND FORECAST: *The amount of American business, government, and personal debt has more than doubled since the 1980s.*

The U.S. Congress is contemplating an additional $1 trillion in rescue and stimulus spending to boost the economy and help bail out the corporate sector.

Any relief will be temporary. Long term, we forecast more highly indebted companies, especially those in hard-hit sectors such as dining, travel, hospitality, and entertainment, will not survive.

DOLLAR DOWN, EURO UP

Investors are increasingly betting that the dollar will weaken against the euro, according to data from the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

Positions “shorting” the dollar, or poised to make money as the dollar’s value falls, reached $24.7 billion last week, rising for the fourth consecutive week and jumping up from $18.8 billion the week before.

The volume of short positions on the dollar has not been this high since August 2011 when the dollar was down 33 percent from where it was in April, before it began its decline.

The dollar’s weakness in recent weeks stems from the U.S. Federal Reserve’s continued near-zero interest rates, rising economic risks as COVID virus case numbers increase in the U.S., and the flood of dollars across the world the Fed has made available to help nations’ economies recover from the shutdown.

On 28 July, the dollar fell to its lowest value in two years against an assortment of six major foreign currencies, down about 10 percent from its 2020 high in March.

In contrast, the number of futures contracts betting the euro's value will rise reached a record 157,559 last week.

Renewed enthusiasm for the euro began when the European Union's leaders agreed on a massive stimulus plan to return the continent's economy toward growth.

Since touching its 2020 low point in March, the euro has gained 12 percent against the dollar.

TREND FORECAST: *The economic data from the Eurozone does not warrant a strong euro.*

It is primarily rising because the dollar is falling.

From the drop in employed Spanish workers last month being the biggest on record, to plunging GDPs across the continent – and the European Central Banks endless money injection schemes – while the euro may move higher against the dollar, its true value, compared to gold, silver, and even cryptocurrencies, will diminish.

Many European nations reliant on tourism (which accounts for some 10 percent of many nation's GDP) have imposed strict travel rules, such as banning U.S. citizens. Thus, tourism will not rebound this year… or next.

Even when COVID-related restrictions are lifted, the economic devastation of lost jobs and declining incomes across the globe will push the tourism and hospitality sectors lower.

Beyond tourism, on the export manufacturing front, declining consumer consumption from major markets such as China will further drag down Eurozone GDPs. Thus, with industries declining and unemployment rising, the ECB will further devalue the euro by pumping more of them into failing equity markets, business sectors, and deeply indebted governments.

CONSTRUCTION SPENDING, EMPLOYMENT DWINDLE

U.S. construction spending in June totaled $1.36 trillion, down 0.7 percent from May and the lowest monthly amount this year, according to the Associated General Contractors of America (AGCA).

June marked the fourth consecutive month of reduced spending.

Construction spending peaked at a record $1.44 trillion in February, but since then has skidded 6 percent, the sharpest four-month decline in ten years, said Ken Simonson, AGCA's chief economist.

Highway and street construction slowed 1.7 percent, other transportation projects were down 0.6 percent, and educational projects fell by 2.7 percent.

Commercial construction sagged 1.3 percent. Single-family home building slid 3.6 percent, its sharpest drop in almost four years. However, multifamily home construction rose 3 percent.

Other gainers: factory construction edged up 1.7 percent and office building rose 0.3 percent.

With tax revenues vanishing as the economy languishes, construction spending is likely to fall further, ACGA officials warned. They urged Congress to add infrastructure spending to the next economic rescue bill to ensure states and municipalities can "improve roads, retrofit schools, and keep drinking water safe," said Stephen Sandherr, AGCA's CEO.

Construction jobs disappeared with the loss in spending.

From June 2019 through June 2020, available construction jobs decreased in 225 out of 358 metro areas, or 62 percent, as surveyed by the AGCA.

The association reported strong gains in construction employment in May and June this year but “those gains were not enough to erase the huge losses in March and April,” Simonson said. “Since the employment data were collected in mid-June, other data suggest construction employment will soon decline, or stagnate at best, in much of the country.”

Hardest hit: the Brockton-Bridgewater-Easton area of eastern Massachusetts lost 37 percent of its construction jobs; New York City lost 24 percent.

TREND FORECAST: *While we forecast a short term, slight uptick in homebuilding, there will be a sharp downturn in commercial real estate development and brick and mortar construction. Thus, more jobs will be lost once the current projects under construction are completed.*

HOTEL EMPLOYMENT BLUES

Since American politicians began locking down the nation in March, only 37 percent of hotels have brought back half or more of the full-time workers laid off earlier this year according to the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA).

The survey also found that:

- 87 percent of U.S. hotels laid off workers due to the shutdown;
- 36 percent have not recalled any workers back to full-time employment;
- 24 percent have returned to pre-shutdown staffing of 60 percent or more;
- 29 percent are at or below 20 percent of their pre-shutdown staff levels;

- more than 50 percent of respondents believe they are in danger of losing their property to mortgage foreclosure as a result of the shutdown.

TREND FORECAST: *As we have continually forecast, with facts and data, there will be sharply rising bankruptcies throughout the hotel industry as tourism and business travel register sharp declines.*

Beyond the hotel industry and those employed by it, the economic fallout will ripple through all the businesses and industries that serve it. From food and product suppliers, entertainers to the lack of new construction, since supply of hotels will be much greater than demand, cities, towns and villages reliant of hotel business will also be hit hard.

LUXURY RENT CRASH

We had forecast this would happen long before the nationwide lockdowns began in March. And now, a bad situation is turning much worse.

In "Ghost Town" New York City, average asking rents along 16 major retail shopping strips in Manhattan slid in 2020's second quarter, the 11th consecutive quarter rents have fallen.

Rents in these areas slipped an average of 11.3 percent year-on-year to $688 per square foot, the first time since 2011 that rents have averaged below $700, according to CBRE, a real estate services firm.

Along the 16 corridors, 235 storefronts are vacant, passing 2013's record of 230.

The priciest square footage lies along Fifth Avenue's Plaza District, reaching from 49th to 59th Streets and studded by the likes of Cartier, Gucci, and Tiffany & Co.

Rents there have held firm from this year's first quarter at the same $3,000 per square foot but are 4.8 percent below prices a year earlier.

Madison Avenue from 57th Street to 72nd Street, home to boutiques belonging to Balenciaga, Celine, and Hermès, saw rents edge down to $882, 15.3 percent below the same period in the previous year.

Storefronts on SoHo's Prince Street fell furthest, dropping more than a third from $699 a year ago to $437 per square foot now, a 37-percent crash that has brought rents below $500 for the first time since 2014.

Tourists, the key market for luxury retailers, have been absent for months, leaving stores with little cash flow to pay stratospheric lease costs. Even native New Yorkers spent weeks hunkered at home instead of strolling and shopping.

"In the U.S., you will see that what was once perceived as a luxury block in any major city is no longer exclusively luxury," said Naveen Jaggi, head of retail advisory services at JLL, a real estate services firm.

On Fifth Avenue, "you see a Vans," known for skateboard shoes, "a Five Below" discount store, "and a Timberland" outdoor wear outlet. "That's all you need to know about the direction of Fifth Avenue."

"We will see an extension of what happened in 2008 and 2009," he added, "which left American consumers shifting toward value more aggressively."

Similar scenes of empty storefronts and troubled retailers to the rich can be seen on the "Magnificent Mile" of Chicago's Michigan Avenue, the Las Vegas Strip, and Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles.

Worldwide, luxury retail sales will drop as much as 29 percent this year, losing $85 to $120 billion compared to 2019, the Boston Consulting Group predicted.

TREND FORECAST: *With facts and data, we had forecast the luxury retail slump that hit New York City and which would hit other high-price rental areas was well underway before the lockdowns and COVID Hysteria struck.*

It's all about the bottom line, and the bottom of expensive retail rentals was falling out as wage growth stagnated, the general public sunk deeper into debt, and the wealth was concentrated among the one percent.

And now, with tourism barely existing, strict government regulations imposed that limits businesses and entertainment venues locked down for the foreseeable future, the high-end consumer market sector that can reinvigorate luxury sales is outward bound from densely populated cites… again, as we had forecast in February.

No Business, No Rent

As we have been reporting since March, across the retail spectrum, many retailers have stopped paying rents and are suing to break their leases. Among them is high-end handbag maker Valentino. Renters are also using the economic shutdown as leverage to negotiate lower rents, knowing landlords cannot afford to see properties stand empty.

LUXURY BRANDS FEEL YOUR PAIN

Gucci, the Italian fashion house, saw revenue fall 34 percent to €3.1 billion in the first half of the year. The company's operating profit was down 51 percent to €929 million.

Gucci has been restructuring its operation to rely less on third-party production contractors and instead has been buying up suppliers and opening its own factories.

The company said the shutdown and reduced revenue has not changed that strategy.

Overall sales for Kering SA, Gucci's parent company, fell 30 percent to €5.4 billion for the period.

Kering also owns the Balenciaga, Bottego Veneta, and Saint Laurent fashion brands.

Gucci has lost market share to Dior and Louis Vuitton, two of its main competitors in luxury, both owned by LVMH (Möet Hennessey-Louis Vuitton), which reported an 84-percent hit to profits in 2020's first half, falling to €522 billion, far below analysts' expectations.

The company said it was unable to cut costs quickly enough to cope with the loss of sales wrought by the global economic shutdown.

Luxury fashion houses depend on tourists for a significant amount of revenue, a cohort that has been largely locked down at home for the last four months.

Although many of LVMH's boutiques have reopened in China and are beginning to in Europe, a large number of U.S. sites remain shut due to the COVID virus's resurgence.

LVMH said it still intends to purchase Tiffany & Co. for $16 billion and is awaiting antitrust rulings on the deal.

AS GOES GOOGLE TRENDS

Google, whose ad revenues had risen in every quarter of the company's 22-year history, reported an 8-percent drop in ad sales during the second quarter, compared to a year previous.

Revenue was down about $2.6 billion for the period as major advertisers, including travel companies and consumer products makers, cut ad spending to conserve cash during the economic shutdown.

Alphabet Inc., Google's parent company, posted ad revenues of $29.9 billion for the year's second quarter, compared to $32.5 billion a year earlier. The softness came from the company's traditional search function; YouTube, another Alphabet property, showed a slight gain in revenue.

The company showed a profit of $6.4 billion for the quarter, a 30-percent drop year-on-year, with its margin shrinking from 24 percent to 17.

Ad sales are returning but "it's premature to say we are out of the woods," said Chief Financial Officer Ruth Porat, Alphabet's CFO.

TREND FORECAST: *Advertising budgets, as we have continually reported, are among the first to be cut when businesses goes down. As the economy worsens, advertising revenues will continue to decline.*

In addition, the true efficacy of online advertising is still very much in doubt. Click-throughs do not equal sales, and, as we reported over the years, big tech has artificially inflated those numbers.

In this New ABnormal, on-trend companies will seek new platforms to reach their customer base with new messages and new delivery systems.

Stay Home

Google has ordered employees working from home to continue to do so until at least next July.

The order affects almost all 200,000 full-time and contract workers at Google and Alphabet, its parent company.

The move not only reduces workers' exposure to the COVID virus but also enables Google to move out of office spaces and slash overhead costs.

Google has become the first tech giant to formalize a year-long work-from-home initiative.

Microsoft has said workers may return to its New York City offices in October.

Twitter has said it is unsure when workers will return to their offices but, when the time comes, the number returning will be limited to 20 percent of capacity.

TREND FORECAST: *As goes big tech, so goes much of the business world. As we reported since the COVID Hysteria first hit, it was big tech that told their employees to stay home and "Be Safe," and most of the business world followed.*

And, as we had forecast, with less people commuting to work, commercial real estate prices will sharply fall and business and transportation systems that once relied on large workforces going to work will economically suffer.

GLOBAL ECONOMIC TRENDS

Economies of the 19 countries that share the euro currency collectively lost 12.1 percent in this year's second quarter compared to the first, the worst quarterly performance since records began being kept in 1995.

Annualized, the loss amounts to 40.3 percent, significantly worse than the U.S.'s 32.9-percent annualized contraction.

The second quarter held the bulk of economic damage done by the global economic shutdown.

France's economy shrank 13.8 percent; Germany's by 10.1 percent; Italy's GDP dwindled by 12.4 percent; and Spain's economy, the worst performer in the Eurozone, crashed by 18.5 percent.

While some European countries are again seeing a rise in the number of COVID cases, many of the continent's governments have vowed to not shut down their economies again as drastically as they did in March and April. However, they have promised to respond aggressively if the virus resurges.

The European Central Bank has forecast an overall 8.7-percent decline in the Eurozone's economy this year, although it sees significant growth in the current quarter.

Recent data indicates the Eurozone "is having a much bigger snapback" than was expected and greater than that in the U.S., said Holger Schmieding, Berenberg Bank's Chief Economist.

Still, "the recovery will be painfully slow," said Andrew Kenningham, Chief Europe Economist at Capital Economics.

SWEDEN'S ECONOMY NOT LOCKED DOWN AND OUT. Sweden's economy is bouncing back, but it had less distance to travel than that of other European economies.

Sweden did not shut down its economy in the face of the COVID panic. Schools and most businesses remained open entirely or, at least, to some degree.

As a result, Sweden's COVID death rate has been higher than that of its Scandinavian neighbors but lower than Belgium, Britain, France, and Spain, which enforced drastic lockdowns.

Because it remained open, Sweden's economy is expected to decline only about 5 percent this year, while the economies of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain are all forecast to plunge by double digits.

Economic performances of many of the nation's iconic companies, including Electrolux, Ericcson, and Handelsbanken beat analysts' expectations for the second quarter.

The nation has recorded relatively few personal or business bankruptcies related to economic straits, banks report low rates of bad loans, companies' credit ratings stayed strong, and the country's housing sector showed a record gain in July.

Analysts say keeping schools open was key to ensuring parents could work and maintain family incomes and business productivity without the government needing to take on huge debts through stimulus spending.

INFLATION MAKES SURPRISE RETURN IN EUROPE. As Europe's economies turned in their worst quarterly performance in decades during the year's second three months, consumer prices in countries sharing the euro currency rose in July by 0.4 percent year-on-year, following a 0.3-percent bump in June.

Energy prices led the increase, rising 0.6 percent.

In July, core inflation measures, which exclude the volatile food and energy numbers, sped up 1.2 percent from 0.8 percent in June.

Analysts had expected July's figure to remain at 0.8 percent last month, according to a *Wall Street Journal* poll of economists.

The European Central Bank forecasts inflation to be 0.3 percent overall this year, rising to 0.8 percent next year, and climbing to 1.3 percent in 2022, remaining below the bank's target inflation rate of 2 percent.

July's jump in inflation may be due to pent-up demand for a range of goods being let loose as national economies reopened.

TREND FORECAST: *We had previously forecast "Dragflation," which means economies would go down but prices would go up.*

Prices would go up not because of supply and demand, since we had believed with economies locked down there would much more supply than demand, as with oil, but because the value of currencies would decline. Thus, the cheaper the currency, the more it would cost to buy products.

However, we have our Trends-Eye view on how inflation may rise even sharper. Currently, there is an unprecedented supply chain disruption. With so many nations locked down, there are shortages of supply in many product areas.

Should the supply chain disruption continue, prices would sharply escalate in affected segments, worsening the draflation trend.

MEXICO'S ECONOMY SHRINKS FOR FIFTH CONSECUTIVE QUARTER.
Mexico's recession is taking shape as the worst in a century.

The Mexican economy shrank 17.3 percent in this year's second quarter compared to the first and compared to the 18.9-percent drubbing to the country's GDP a year earlier.

The country's economy will contract 10.5 percent this year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has forecast, although some analysts predict a loss as high as 12 percent.

"We estimate it will take until the end of 2024 to get back to the level of GDP we had at the end of 2019," said economist Carlos Serrano at BBVA, a bank holding company.

Mexico entered a recession in 2019, when the year's GDP retreated 0.3 percent from 2018's.

IMF WILL LEND SOUTH AFRICA $4.3 BILLION. The IMF will lend South Africa $4.1 billion.

The loan will help support a national stimulus program worth more than $30 billion that will pay unemployment benefits and other aid to workers and businesses damaged by the economic shutdown.

The loan will mature in five years and charge interest based on a formula comprising the value of a mix of currencies and various surcharges.

South Africa's economy will shrink 8 percent this year, the IMF has predicted, the steepest slide since 1994.

TEN YEARS' ECONOMIC GROWTH DESTROYED IN SECOND QUARTER. Germany's economy contracted 10.1 percent in this year's second quarter and the U.S.'s shrank 9.5 percent, government figures show.

Damage to the U.S. GDP was worse than during any quarter of the Great Depression; Germany's was the sharpest decline since 1970, when records began being kept.

The quarter's crash "wiped out nearly ten years of growth," said Florian Hense, an economist at Berenberg Capital Markets.

"We do not expect the economy to reach pre-COVID output levels until 2021 at the earliest," said Erik Lundh, the Conference Board's senior economist.

RESURGENT VIRUS DASHES HOPE OF QUICK RECOVERY. Hopes for a clear turn toward economic recovery have been quenched by the media hysteria reporting the rise in COVID cases through Brazil, India, Japan, South Africa, and parts of Europe and the U.S.

Across the Asia-Pacific region, which accounted for more than 70 percent of the world's GDP growth in 2019, the pace of recovery "materially slowed" in June, according to Goldman Sachs.

U.S. businesses see the Asia-Pacific stumble reflected at home.

More than half of companies listed on the S&P 500 index reported second-quarter results averaging losses of 33 percent compared to the year before.

General Electric, General Motors, Nike, and Starbucks were among top-tier companies in the red for the period.

More than 160 major U.S. firms have gone bankrupt during the shutdown, including Ascena Retail Group, Hertz, and J.C. Penney.

"While we were encouraged by the early signs of recovery, the past few weeks demonstrate the trajectory may be uneven," Boeing CEO David Calhoun said last week.

Boeing customer KLM airline announced 4,500 to 5,000 job cuts among pilots, cabin crews, and ground staff to be made from now through next year.

The COVID panic has halted the company's progress in paying down debt.

"Cry and start over, is how it feels," said KLM CEO Pieter Elbers.

GOING DOWN, GOING BUST, GOING OUT

OIL MAJORS' PROFITS HIT A DRY HOLE. Major oil companies lost more than $15 billion in this year's second quarter, tanking their stock prices.

ExxonMobil, the world's biggest oil company, posted a second consecutive negative quarter for the first time, reporting a $1.1-billion loss, compared to $3.1 billion in profit a year earlier.

Chevron lost $8.3 billion, its largest quarterly loss since 1998 when Dow Jones Market Data began recording the data. It had turned a $4.2-billion profit during the same period in 2019.

The company wrote down $2.6 billion on its Venezuelan holdings, citing the country's economic crash and political chaos. It wrote down another $3.1 billion, lowering its estimates for future oil prices.

Royal Dutch Shell took a second-quarter loss of $18.4 billion, its first quarterly loss since 2015, which included a $16.8-billion write-down.

A year earlier, the company reported profits of $3 billion.

Shell also saw its debt rise to 33 percent of capital; its target had been 25 percent.

French oil giant, Total, posted an $8.4 billion loss, of which $8.1 billion was due to lowering asset values. Total reported its gas stations saw a 30-percent decline in demand for the quarter, but by June demand had climbed back to 90 percent of pre-shutdown levels.

U.S. oil prices averaged below $30 a barrel and international benchmark Brent crude $33 over this year's second quarter, according to Dow Jones Market Data, prices at which few U.S. companies or global majors can break even.

At one point in April, global oil demand fell by a third, while oil companies kept producing and creating a glut that briefly drove U.S. futures prices into negative numbers for the first time.

Prices have since recovered somewhat and now hover steadily around $40 a barrel.

In response to a flooded market, ExxonMobil cut back production 7 percent and Chevron 3 percent in the quarter. Exxon's exploration and production arm lost $1.7 billion for the period, Chevron's $6.1 billion.

Meanwhile, active money managers are holding fewer oil and gas assets than at any time since 2005, according to investment bank Evercore ISI.

The loss of confidence in the stocks has driven prices down. ExxonMobil is trading at its lowest level since 1977, long before Exxon and Mobil combined; BP, Shell, and Total are trading at 30-year lows, the bank reported.

Shell cut its stock dividend in half for the first time in 75 years. Both Exxon and Chevron have vowed not to cut dividends this year.

Exxon had announced a 30-percent cut to its capital spending for this year and now has identified "significant potential for additional reductions," especially in the U.S. Permian Basin shale play, where it will reduce its number of working rigs by at least 75 percent this year.

Chevon now has just four rigs in the basin and will cut production there by 7 percent this year.

Exxon said it also will take on no new debt this year, after piling on $8.8 billion in loans during the second quarter.

Shell is restructuring to become leaner and simpler, said CFO Jessica Uhl, without offering details.

"There remains continued significant uncertainty in terms of how the pandemic will play out," she added. "We're seeing a lot of starting and stopping around the world that impacts our assets [and] supply chains."

TREND FORECAST: *As global economies sink deeper, oil prices will go lower. The supply is far greater than demand.*

As we have long forecast, oil prices will remain relatively steady but are unlikely to settle above $50 this year.

Many oil-rich nations, both rich and poor, need prices higher than the $50 per barrel range to turn a profit.

As we have forecast in our Geopolitical sections, with tensions heating up in the Middle East, should major military conflict erupt between Egypt and Turkey in the Libyan conflict and/or the U.S. and Israel vs. Iran… oil prices will sharply spike.

Should that occur, the already declining world economy will crash further into the "Greatest Depression."

AUTOMAKERS RUN INTO THE DITCH. Ford Motor Co. reported losing $1.9 billion in the second quarter, a lesser hit than the $5 billion loss the company had forecast in April.

The company lost money in every market, including North America, its most lucrative.

Volkswagen, which also owns Audi and Porsche, lost €1.61 billion, compared to a net profit of €3.96 billion in 2019's second quarter. Revenue fell 37 percent to €41.08.

Renault posted losses of €7.29 billion for the first half of the year, made worse by its part ownership of the struggling Nissan Motor Co., which expects to lose $6.4 billion in its current year.

Renault's performance more than doubled the loss it recorded for all of 2009 in the midst of the Great Recession and sunk below analysts' expected €4.49-billion loss.

General Motors Co. posted a $536 million pre-tax loss for the same period.

NISSAN SEES ANOTHER YEAR OF LOSS. For the second consecutive fiscal year, Nissan Motors will lose more than $6 billion, the company said on 28 July.

The company projected a loss worth $6.4 billion for the year ending March 2021.

Last year's losses were attributed to corporate restructuring; this year's will be due to a weak vehicle market, Nissan said.

The company projects sales of four million vehicles this fiscal year, compared to 4.9 million in the last.

TREND FORECAST: *It should be noted we have been reporting since last year that auto sales in major markets such as China, Europe and India were already in* *sharp decline. Thus, the slump in auto sales will worsen as the global economy continues to weaken.*

EUROPEAN AIRLINE CONGLOMERATE POSTS RECORD LOSS. International Consolidated Airlines Group (ICAG) reported a record loss during this year's second quarter and announced plans to reduce operations for the rest of 2020.

The company owns British Airways, Iberia Airlines, and Aerlingus in Ireland.

ICAG will reduce capacity 76 percent in the current quarter, compared to the same period a year ago, and 46 percent in the fourth.

Previously, the company had said it would reduce capacity by 55 and 30 percent, respectively.

ICAG also altered its business outlook, saying now that air travel will return to pre-pandemic levels in 2024, not 2023 as it had predicted earlier.

In the second quarter, the airline group posted a loss of €2.1 billion, contrasted with a profit of €736 million in the same period a year earlier. Second-quarter sales plunged 89 percent to €741 million.

The airline group posted a record €3.8-billion net loss for the first half of this year, contrasted with a net profit of €806 million during the first six months of 2019. However, cargo revenues jumped 31.3 percent from the beginning of the year through June.

British Airways alone lost £711 million during the second quarter. The carrier lost £187 million in the three months following the 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. and only £309 million in the first three months of 2009 during the worst of the Great Recession.

British Airways also is retiring 32 Boeing jets and 15 Airbus planes and is deferring deliveries of 68 new Airbus and Boeing jets it was going to accept through 2022.

In late July, American Airlines and Southwest Airlines cut schedules after an early jump in reservations after economies began to reopen fell back.

The airline industry was forced to make structural changes as a result of the 2001 attacks and the Great Recession, noted Willie Walsh, ICAG's CEO.

The scale of the challenges the industry faced then were “much smaller,” he said.

“Anyone who believes this is just a temporary downturn and therefore can be fixed with temporary measures seriously misjudges what the industry is going through.”

BOEING STILL IN A TAILSPIN. The U.S.’s flagship aircraft maker lost a worse-than-expected $2.4 billion in 2020’s second quarter, leading it to plan more layoffs than the 19,000 already announced and to mull the prospect of closing at least one of its three main U.S. assembly plants.

Revenue fell 25 percent year-on-year to $11.8 billion.

Boeing ended the period with about $30 billion in liquidity and $60 billion in debts.

The company’s commercial aircraft business will remain weak for the balance of this year, company officials said, leaving Boeing relying more heavily on defense contracts, revenue from which was flat in the quarter.

The company expects commercial aircraft sales to begin to recover in 2021, although it does not see airplane travel returning to pre-pandemic levels until 2023.

TREND FORECAST: *Global air travel will fall 60 percent this year compared to last and not fully recover until 2024, according to the International Air Travel Association, the airline, travel and hospitality sectors will sink deeper in depression.*

OLDEST U.S. CLOTHING RETAILER GOES BUST. Lord & Taylor, the tony clothier founded in 1826, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on 2 August, listing both assets and debts as being between $100 million and $500 million.

Lord & Taylor was planning to sell off the inventory in its 38 department stores once the economic shutdown was lifted, file for bankruptcy, and cease to exist, Reuters reported in May.

Le Tote, a fashion rental start-up, bought Lord & Taylor from Saks Fifth Avenue in 2019 from Hudson’s Bay Company for 100 million Canadian dollars. Hudson’s

Bay retained ownership of some Lord & Taylor store buildings and agreed to pay the company's rents, reported as tens of millions of dollars annually.

Lord & Taylor has been a fixture on New York's Fifth Avenue since 1914 and was renowned for its December holiday window displays.

The company joins a roster of retailers gone bust during the economic shutdown, including J. Crew, J.C. Penney, Lucky Brand, and Neiman Marcus.

TREND FORECAST: *With a masked-up, work-at-home, online-leaning school system New ABnormal behavioral culture, more people will get less dressed up, putting more downward pressure on the clothing retail sector.*

McDONALD'S: A BIG BITE OUT OF SALES. Sales at McDonald's U.S. restaurants shrank 24 percent during the year's second quarter, slightly more than analysts had expected.

Sales at stores outside the U.S. plunged 41 percent.

Analysts had looked for earnings of 74 cents a share but the company delivered only 66 cents, a 68 percent decline from a year earlier.

The corporation has spent $200 million during the lockdown on additional advertising to drive more customers to its stores, $31 million on supply-chain expenses, and $45 million to cover franchisees' unpaid bills, McDonald's reported.

Restaurants' margins fell 25 percent as franchisees bought personal protective equipment for workers.

Drive-through sales accounted for 90 percent of sales in McDonald's U.S. stores.

STARBUCKS POSTS BIG LOSS. Starbucks reported sales at its stores plummeted 40 percent during the second quarter, the worst performance in more than a decade, with revenues carving out a $704-milion loss for the period.

The company reported $4.2 billion in sales for its most recent quarter, 38 percent below those a year earlier.

Starbucks said it expects store sales to be down 12 to 17 percent for the year and fourth-quarter revenue to drop 10 to 15 percent below the third's.

However, the company said sales are improving already in this quarter and expects losses to moderate now that economies are reopening.

About 96 percent of its U.S. stores are open in some capacity, with more sales shifting to suburban locations as urban office centers host fewer workers, Starbucks reported.

After the pandemic abates, the company will continue the enhanced pick-up and delivery services it began during the lockdown and will continue building more to-go-only stores.

TREND FORECAST: *From McDonald's to Starbucks, fast food outlets around the world are closing stores and going drive-thru. Considering the virus hysteria is but a half-year old, we forecast long-term strategic decisions based on just a few months of New ABnormal behavior will be deleterious to future growth of corporations that are rapidly embracing them. Indeed, as evidenced by the data, drive-thrus are not enough to drive up sales to pre COVID levels.*

VISA, MASTERCARD EARNINGS FALL. Skyrocketing unemployment and shut-down businesses caused credit-card lender Visa Inc.'s earnings to fall 23 percent in the second quarter, compared to a year previous.

Credit card purchases were down 20 percent during the same period. Debit-card use rose 3 percent.

Visa's net income fell from $3.1 billion a year earlier to $2.4 billion in the second quarter. Revenue was down 17 percent, meeting analysts' expectations.

Mastercard's revenue shrank 19 percent in the second quarter, year-on-year, to $3.34 billion as people guarded their pennies and millions of cardholders were out of work.

Still, the figure bested analysts' estimates of $3.25 billion.

The company posted earnings for the period of $1.42 billion, or $1.41 a share, compared to $2.05 billion and $2 a share for the same period in 2019.

The declines resulted, in part, from a 10-percent drop in the average amount of purchases made with the cards and a 45-percent slump in international transactions.

Mastercard also recorded $22 million in legal fees and settlement costs related to disputes with European merchants.

LLOYD'S BRACES FOR LOSSES. Lloyd's Banking Group has set aside another £2.4 billion to cover an expected rising tide of bad debts, pushing the company into a £676-million loss for the second quarter and sending its share price down 7 percent to an eight-year low.

The added reserves were earmarked largely for bad mortgage loans, which the company sees rising sharply.

Barclay's net profits tumbled 91 percent in the second quarter, also due to loan loss set-asides that were greater than previously planned.

Santander Bank lost €11.1 billion in the quarter and devalued its U.K. division by 85 percent.

HARLEY POSTS SECOND-QUARTER LOSS AMID FALLING SALES. Harley Davidson reported 27 percent fewer sales during this year's second quarter than in 2019's.

The company sold 52,700 vehicles during the three-month stretch, compared to 71,800 a year earlier.

The drop reflected Harley's reduced 38.5-percent share of the U.S. big-bike market. A year ago, its share was 46.6 percent.

In July, the company announced 700 layoffs, about 13 percent of its global workforce, and an initiative to chop $250 million in costs.

Harley's revenue fell 53 percent year-on-year to $669.3 million.

TREND FORECAST: *The market sector Harley targets, aging boomers, is dying and going broke. Had they moved forward with their previous strategy of making cheaper bikes to appeal to broader, lower income consumers across the globe – with updated performance levels and styles – they would have been on-trend.*

L BRANDS SHEDS WORKERS. L Brands, which owns Victoria's Secret and Bath & Body Works, will cut 850 jobs, or about 15 percent, from its corporate-level workforce as part of an effort to save $400 million a year.

The company expects to pay about $75 million in severance costs.

L Brands will shutter 250 Victoria's Secret stores this year and is haggling with landlords for concessions in rents in other locales.

Sales at Victoria's Secret slid 40 percent during the second quarter from a year earlier, while Bath & Body Works sales bumped up 10 percent. Overall, the company's sales fell 20 percent for the period.

MGM RESORTS: NO FUN IN SECOND QUARTER. MGM Resorts International announced a 91-percent plunge in its second-quarter revenue to $290 million against $3.2 billion a year earlier, showing the damage from travel bans imposed as part of the global economic halt.

The company's operating loss was $1 billion, compared to operating income of $371 million for the same period in 2019.

"The near-term operating environment will remain challenging and unpredictable as COVID… health and safety protocols, and travel restrictions continue to heavily impact our business," said CEO Bill Hornbuckle.

On the Las Vegas Strip, MGM's casinos Bellagio, Excalibur, Luxor, MGM Grand, and New York-New York reopened in June. The casinos are allowed only 50 percent of capacity and few visitors are ready to fly, so Las Vegas's gambling empires are forced to rely on local residents and drive-in visitors from neighboring states.

Net revenue was off 50 percent year-on-year for MGM's properties open in June and hotel occupancy was 43 percent, compared to 95 percent a year previous.

Revenues for MGM's casinos in Macau, China's gambling mecca, totaled $33 million; a year earlier, the number was $706 million.

The company reported $4.8 billion cash on hand and debts totaling $11.4 billion as of 30 June.

TREND FORECAST: *Considering the strict COVID imposed regulations on casinos such as limited capacity, social distancing, mask wearing, entertainment restrictions etc., plus the sharp decline in travel and tourism at a time of growing economic hardship… the casino business will not bounce back in the near future.*

We also forecast a sharp drop in both commercial and residential real estate prices in casino cities such as Las Vegas.

TRENDS IN THE MARKETS *by Gregory Mannarino*

MARKETS: A PERFECT STORM

Let me start off by saying this: I congratulate you for being a **Trends Journal** subscriber. Simply because NO OTHER publication on the planet comes close to the accuracy of forecasts published here. Moreover, I would like to give a tremendous shout out to The Man himself, Gerald Celente. Thank you.

With that said, if you have been following my articles in the **Trends Journal**, here again you have witnessed an astounding level of accuracy. All this is specifically directed to allow you to stay WAY ahead of the curve and make the right decisions moving forward. Knowledge is power! *Power enough to change the world.*

Occurring now in the markets is a major convergence of forces that directly affect stocks, bonds, gold, silver, cryptocurrencies, and crude. How these forces interact will have a direct impact on you and your investments.

The COVID Scamdemic has wreaked havoc on U.S. small businesses. As a result, nearly 50 percent of U.S. small businesses have been culled; they are gone and never coming back. Meanwhile, the major U.S. multinational corporations are stronger than ever… a trend that, unfortunately, will continue.

Understanding the markets today is easy. Knowing the end game – **total control** – allows us to make the best decisions moving forward.

As I have been explaining in detail for nearly a decade, we are in the midst of the creation of a new feudal system on a global scale: a society of extreme have's and have not's. Moreover, this is all by design, and it is about **control**.

A direct result of the Scamdemic is an accelerated wipeout of the remaining middle class, which is another trend that will accelerate. With the culling of the mom-and-pop stores and tens of millions left unemployed, the direct merger between corporate entities and this new American government moves forward. A New World Order.

A Disconnected Market

Last week, U.S. GDP suffered its largest drop in history, yet stocks put on gains.

Also, we have seen historic losses for the U.S. dollar in regard to purchasing power. A plummeting dollar creates an "inflated stock market effect": when the dollar is weaker, it takes more to buy things, even shares of stock. Therefore, a falling dollar gives a visual boost to stock prices – it inflates them. The weaker dollar also has a profound effect on gold, silver, cryptocurrencies, crude, and other commodities. Again, it takes more deflated dollars to buy these assets, so their price, based in dollars, rises.

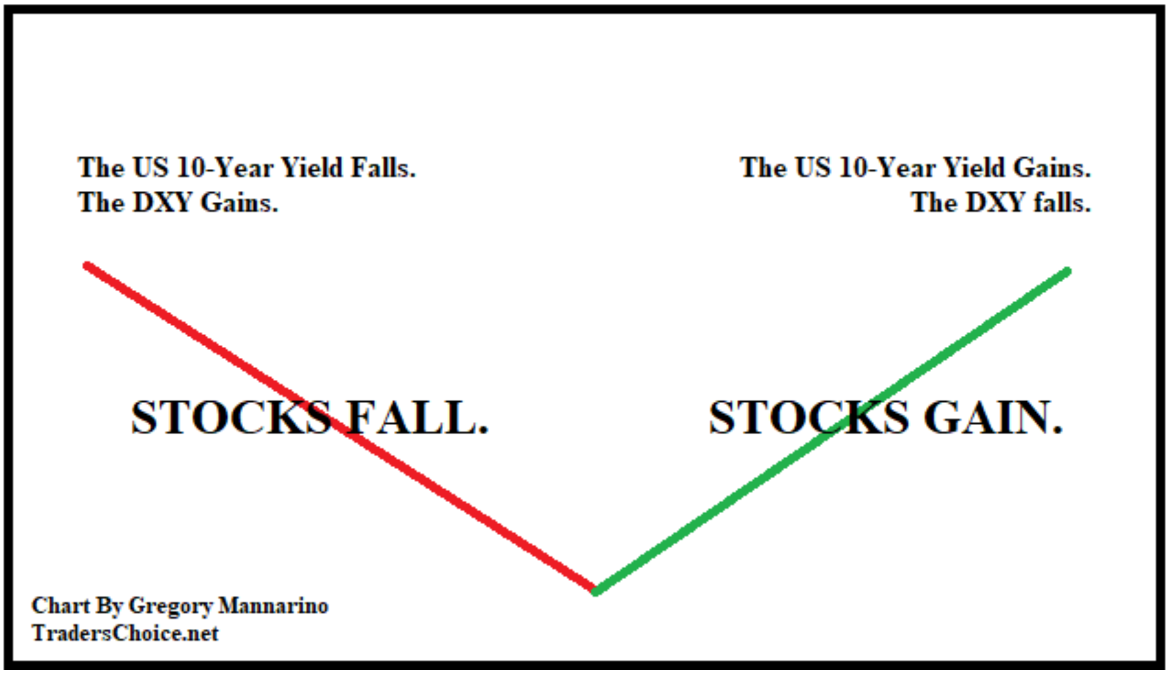
This recent run up in the price of gold, silver, crypto, and the falling dollar should run into a corrective phase. What I mean is in regard to gold, silver, and crypto, a price pullback to a new support level, which will begin a new run higher.

Regarding the dollar, I would expect to see a bounce to a resistance level, then the downtrend to resume.

What does this mean for stocks?

The price action of stocks is directly reflective of two dynamics: the dollar (or "DXY" dollar index) and the 10-year yield.

Below is a chart included in my previous **Trends Journal** article, "HOW TO STAY AHEAD OF THE MARKET." Note how the dollar and 10-year yield interaction move stocks.



The stock market has made a significant run higher as of late and, in addition to the dollar, should also begin a corrective phase. Keep in mind that geopolitical events will move markets. Every manner of stock market positive "news" will be floated out in an attempt to keep the market inflated.

The market is used as a distraction mechanism. The public believes if stock prices are high, the economy must be doing well. At previous times, this has proven to be true.

But, today, with the Federal Reserve in complete control of the markets, stock prices have no bearing on reality with regard to price action, and they are in an epic bubble. With that, distorted stock prices do not guarantee stocks will drop. Quite to the contrary, distortions in markets can persist for long periods of time.

I expect, however, that a corrective phase in the markets is likely to come soon.

by Gregory Mannarino, TradersChoice.net

TRENDS IN SURVIVALISM *by Bradley J. Steiner*

PROTECTING YOURSELF: THE CARJACKING NIGHTMARE

When New York City locked down in March, by mid-April, auto thefts soared 63 percent.

It's a trend. And as the global economy dives deeper, car thefts will continue to rise.

Without having experienced it, you probably cannot come close to fully understanding the immediate terror, helplessness, hopelessness, and subsequent depression coupled with future fear of leaving one's home and driving anywhere, that many who have been victimized by carjackers have felt and lived with.

As I see it, we have deteriorated into a useless, whining, disgraceful society of hand-wringing victim-types, with a law enforcement mission directed at curtailing domestic spats, ticketing those who drive without their seatbelts fastened, and arresting honest business people ("small business entrepreneurial types" please note) for perhaps not having closed down their businesses or not demanding they and those who patronize those businesses wear a face mask. All in order to defeat the World Enemy: Covid-19!

Carjacking is one manifestation of violent crime that is, not surprisingly, increasing as we sink deeper and deeper into economic despair.

And again, the deeper the "Greatest Depression" goes, the higher the crime rate skyrockets.

Steal a Horse, Steal a Car?

In that very sensible period and place in America's history, for some reason labeled the "Wild West," those who stole a man's horse were, when caught, hanged.

It was more than just in the movies, it was a fact of life. If a man came upon some scum attempting to steal his horse, he shot him. End of problem.

Either way, the criminal act of depriving a person of his crucially-needed transportation (or attempting to deprive him of it) was permanent.

Horse thieves never lived to become recidivists. Hanging and gunfire tended to bring a swift and certain end to the 1800's equivalent of today's car thief or "jacker."

In Seattle, WA (a kind of mecca for the scurrilous bipedal garbage who steal people's transportation), it is only after seven convictions that one of these dirtbags finally is sentenced to a jail term. And it's a lenient jail term. No firing squad, stoning, hanging, or gas chamber.

Am I actually suggesting a carjacker/auto thief should be put to death? You're goddamn right I am!

Consider the plight of someone desperately needing to drive a loved one to an emergency room in the middle of the night, only to discover his vehicle is not there. Or the young woman with her child, suddenly facing some bastard with a gun, demanding the key to her car. Or the businessman or student, stopping to get gas for his car and finding himself the victim of one or more rodents who steal his vehicle, leaving him unable to get to work or to school, and being hamstrung possibly for weeks, unable to use his customary means of transportation (which cost and costs him a nice chunk of money on top of his other living expenses).

Yes. I think carjackers and car thieves should be hanged.

Or… better still… stopped (literally) dead in their tracks by armed would-be victims who deal with them exactly as they deserve.

In the real world of self-defense, people who will fight for their lives know overconfident unarmed car thieves who believe they can scare and intimidate some citizen into passively surrendering his vehicle can often be dropped neatly on the pavement where they stand by some no-nonsense blows of unarmed combat.

In any case, I would like to provide you with suggestions about vehicle security.

Some of these suggestions are identical to those we are taught in professional evasive, counterterrorist driving courses:

- Do not stop your vehicle if you are in the process of driving it. A vehicle that pursues you and signals for you to pull over must never be obeyed (unless, of course, it is clearly a police vehicle). Keep your vehicle moving! In every instance of a successful attack – even by trained terrorists – the attackers were successful only after they stopped the target vehicle.

- If, when you are driving, you see a roadblock ahead (other than a law enforcement roadblock), put your vehicle in reverse, back up, turn around, and get outta Dodge! Do not assume that an unruly or any other mob will clear a way for you so you can pass. Get away fast. Never mind what the inconvenience is, how much time you lose, or whatever; just avoid contact with a mob or gang by getting out of that situation, fast.

- If, when you are driving, you suddenly are swarmed by marauding individuals who are hostile and intending to stop your vehicle – in a situation you could not see coming/could not avoid – step on the gas and GO! You don't want to be taken from your car or truck and beaten to death, in addition to losing your vehicle.

- Whenever you get into your vehicle, lock the doors, first thing. Always keep your vehicle doors locked. Car jackings and deadly attacks have occurred when motorists were stopped at red lights without locked doors.

- If you come on an accident in the road or see someone being victimized, do not stop! Drive on and call 911. Unfortunately, scumbags have been known to take advantage of good Samaritans by setting up ploys to stop and entrap them. Don't take a chance.

- If you find yourself being followed, do not drive home. Drive to a police or fire station and keep your hand on the horn while driving. Yes, I know: this could attract the police. Exactly what you want to do!

- Never stop or slow down for strangers or roll your window down for a stranger who approaches your vehicle. Drive!

- Always, always, always, always, always be “situationally aware” – alert! – whenever you are behind the wheel. No reading, no eating, no cell phone conversations, no fixing your hair, and no head-turning while deep in a conversation with a passenger. Discipline or admonish your child later, not while driving.

- Whenever you stop for gas, keep the door of your vehicle locked and the windows rolled up. Even if you will “only be a minute” going inside the station to pay, follow this rule. You do not want to discover, as you drive off down the road, an unwelcome “passenger” who pops up from behind with a knife or a gun. This has happened.

- Consider the use of a tracking device for your vehicle.

- Get gas as soon as your vehicle’s tank is half empty; and get it in broad daylight at a clean, known, safe gas station.

- Ladies: Purchase a large-size man’s hat and leave it on the dashboard over the wheel when you park your car. Freaks who seek to target women will assume the car is being occupied by a man.

- Don’t leave valuables in your car when you park. Lock each door and always keep windows completely rolled up when parked for the night, when shopping, for a visit, etc.

- Hopefully this one is obvious: Never leave the engine running, even for a few seconds, in order to do anything, no matter how “little time” you anticipate taking. This advice is important for all who use a vehicle for delivery purposes (pizza, groceries, etc.).

- You should have your license plate number memorized.

- Whenever you bring your vehicle in for servicing (oil change, etc.) empty out your glove compartment and keep the contents in a bag with you while the vehicle is being serviced. Proof of insurance, registration, anything you normally keep there. Leave only the vehicle key in the ignition at a service station. Never leave any attached keys.

- If you possess a CCW (concealed carry weapon) and carry a handgun lawfully when driving, I strongly recommend a cross-draw holster while driving. A shoulder holster is a good alternative. Either one permits speediest possible accessing of your weapon ready-to-go, if it is needed. *Note: I personally have found cross-draw holsters and shoulder holsters to be the most comfortable and practical for real-world carry and employment, in general.*

- There are devices that enable you to press a button and activate loud-sounding, very realistic "gunshot" noises. I don't know the best places to purchase these or the most reliable models… but they sure are a great idea. I think anyone could see the potential benefit of having one of these installed.

Stay safe. It's up to you.

by Bradley J. Steiner

2020 COVID-19 TREND REPORT

MASKS/NO MASKS? NORDICS SAY "NO!"

Who would call the Nordic nations third world, dictatorial, underdeveloped, scientifically ignorant, and/or irrationally arrogant?

Google, Facebook, Twitter, etc, have blacklisted anti-mask wearing advocates, be they doctors, scientists, or the general public who believe they are not only ineffective but unhealthy. So have the leaders of many nations and executive order-wielding politicians who have imposed strict mask wearing dictates on much of the world's population.

Virtually absent in the western media is the news that Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland all agree there is no proof that wearing masks is effective in slowing the virus spread. According to a YouGov poll, only 5 to 10 percent of respondents in those nations said they wear masks in public venues.

This compares to an overwhelming majority of citizens worldwide (70 to 80 percent) who wear masks regularly and/or want their governments to make mask wearing a forced mandate, including France, Spain, India, Malaysia, Israel, Turkey, and the U.S. ("Land of the Free, Home of the Brave"?).

When asked if he would start recommending public mask wearing, Sweden's chief epidemiologist Dr. Anders Tegnell responded he hadn't seen any "proof that they are effective."

Dutch Treat

Last Wednesday, Dutch Minister for Medical Care, Tamara van Ark, told citizens they did not have to wear face masks. Ms. Van Arc said, "Because from a medical perspective there is no proven effectiveness of masks, the Cabinet has decided there will be no national obligation for wearing non-medical masks."

Following up on this, Jaap van Dissel, Director of the Netherlands National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, pointed to data showing wearing masks incorrectly likely increases the chance of infecting others as those people have a false sense of protection.

TRENDPOST: *It should be noted that from the beginning of the virus outbreak, the Dutch instituted a relatively soft lockdown, with shops remaining open and cycling and walking outdoors promoted. While not keeping their society quite as open as the Swedes, the Dutch government, as in Sweden, advised citizens to be "intelligent" and make common sense "voluntary" decisions to stay protected.*

Meanwhile, European countries such as France, Spain, and Italy, where citizens were heavily fined and monitored by police to prevent any outdoor activities other than for essential services, are not only suffering the economic and social *consequences of hard lockdowns, they are not showing signs of being successful at keeping the virus from spreading.*

"NO MORE MUZZLES"

Last Saturday, depending on the available numbers, somewhere between 25,000 to 100,000 mask-less Germans – in violation of mask wearing mandates and social distancing rules – gathered in Berlin to protest government virus restrictions.

Among the signs being carried: "Corona, false alarm," "Natural defense instead of vaccination," and "We are being forced to wear a muzzle."

Police on bullhorns yelled for protesters to follow social distance requirements and wear masks. Demonstrators responded by chanting, "We're here and we're loud, because we are being robbed of our freedom!"

The situation turned violent as reports cited 45 police officers injured when attempting to break up the crowd. More than 130 protesters were arrested.

Michael Müller, Berlin's mayor, announced the protesters were risking the health of others and pointed out there was no vaccine yet, so the pandemic was not over.

Markus Söder, the politician considered a potential successor of Chancellor Angela Merkel, posted a warning on Twitter: "I am very worried about the rising case number in Germany. Total alertness is needed, and that's why now is not the time for easing restrictions or naïve carelessness."

TRENDPOST: *While German political leaders point out the recent rise in number of virus cases as the reason to maintain mask wearing, social distancing, and other restrictions, they make no mention of the fact that the rate of death has dropped dramatically.*

According to the New York Times's "Germany Coronavirus Map and Case Count," since peaking in mid-April, the death count from COVID-19 in Germany has steadily been dropping, and last week only 23 people died of the virus, the lowest ever.

While headlines blare fear of rising "cases," since the COVID Hysteria began spreading in late January of this year, now, some six months later, Germany, a nation with a population of some 84 million, has the grand total of 9,206 deaths or 0.011 percent.

"Covidiots"

A small group of counter protestors called the anti-mask/anti-social distancing demonstrators "covidiots." Co-leader of the Social Democratic party, Saskia Esken, tweeted that the anti-restriction protesters "are not just endangering our health, they are endangering our success against the pandemic and for the revival of the economy, education and society. Irresponsible!"

TRENDPOST: *To diminish the scope and depth of whom was demonstrating and why, the New York Times pigeonholed the tens of thousands of protestors into "a variety of attendees, including conspiracy theorists and right-wing populists."*

Ignored by the self-proclaimed "Paper of Record" (or, by their deeds of selling wars based on lies and their overt political favoritism over the decades, more appropriately the "Toilet Paper of Record") are the variety of demonstrators that surely included intelligent, well-informed individuals who have read and/or researched the ineffectiveness of made-up social distancing and mask wearing rules imposed by their government.

And, most likely among those who had taken to the streets included business owners and workers suffering from the government imposed lockdown and restrictions. Indeed, Germany recorded its worst decent of its economy in the second quarter since 1970, with its GDP falling a seasonally adjusted 10.1 percent.

"The Mask is Stupid"

In addition to Saturday's large protest in Berlin, a hundreds of anti-mask/anti-social distancing activists took the streets in London the same day, in response to the government's increasing restrictions to deal with the virus.

Among the signs being carried: "Stop the new normal," "Freedom over fear," "Masks are Muzzles" and "The Mask is Stupid."

The U.K. protestors chanted, "Natural defense instead of vaccination," "We are the second wave," and "I will be not be masked, tested, tracked, or poisoned."

Mask Me Up

According to a 22-26 July survey from the U.K.'s Office for National Statistics, 84 percent reported wearing a mask in the last seven days – up from 61 percent two weeks earlier… and only 3 percent were unlikely to wear a mask in the coming days.

On Friday, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who reversed his previous plans to allow more of the nation's businesses to reopen, also expanded the mandate on mask wearing to include museums, cinemas, and places of religious worship as of 8 August.

TRENDPOST: *Absent in the mainstream media coverage of these protests (which has been minimal) are the pros and cons of mask wearing.*

Instead, those opposed to government imposed COVID mandates are accused as selfish individuals who have no concern for the health and safety of fellow citizens.

Aside from not reporting legitimate scientific evidence that challenges their position, they fail to acknowledge the no-mask wearing success of the Nordic nations.

WEAR MASKS, GOGGLE UP

In March, the U.S. media's "leading infectious disease expert," Dr. Anthony Fauci, declared on *CBS's* "60 Minutes":

> "Right now in the United States, people should not be walking around with masks. There's no reason to be walking around with a mask. When you're in the middle of an outbreak, wearing a mask might make people 'feel a little better' and it might even block a droplet, but it's not providing the perfect protection the people think that it is."

Beyond backtracking from his no-mask statement, last Wednesday, Dr. Fauci declared that in addition to his new "must wear mask" edict, "If you have goggles or an eye shield, you should use it."

He predicted that goggle-wearing might become a "formal recommendation" as "if you really want perfect protection of the mucosal surfaces… theoretically, you should protect all the mucosal surfaces." (Note the use of the word "theoretically.")

The #1 top infectious disease expert added that while goggle-wearing "is not universally recommended, if you really want to be complete, you should probably use it if you can."

Mask Fatigue

On 29 July, a *CBS* affiliate in McKinney, TX, reported that a number of employees required to wear face masks during their entire work shift were suffering from headaches, shortness of breath, and increased anxiety.

Complaints ran the gamut from nagging discomfort due to tight elastic to difficulty breathing.

Courtney Warnell, a worker quoted in the story, said, “When I have long days, it’s a 12-hour day, I’m sick when I get home. Sick to my stomach. As soon as I get in the car, I’m pulling it off and I don’t want to do anything else. I just want to go home and be mask-free.”

There have been occasional protests in the U.S. After Washington State Governor Jay Inslee announced mandatory mask wearing in late June, the Lewis County sheriff addressed a gathering of mask-less people by saying, “Don’t be a sheep.”

The following week, Klickitat County Sheriff Bob Songer, who had gained prominence by refusing to enforce other state-mandated restrictions, called governor Inslee “an idiot who was overstepping his bounds, violating people’s constitutional rights.”

TRENDPOST: *In the constantly shifting coronavirus state of confusion, the mainstream media features only a cast of medical establishment “experts” who support draconian lockdown, social distancing, mask wearing, and capacity limitations and other restrictions, while blackballing medical experts and scientific evidence opposed to their recommendations.*

Moreover, as we have reported, those providing counter information and challenging what the mainstream media refers to as the “medical establishment” are banned from social media sites as well as the mainstream media.

This was evidenced last week when “America’s Frontline Doctors” reported their own successful experience treating COVID patients with hydroxychloroquine. They were ridiculed as “characters” by the New York Times and censored by the social media giants.

A number of other platform complaints by anti-lockdown protestors across the globe are the loss of free speech and loss of democracy.

MELBOURNE MADNESS

In America, Trump supporters blame the anti-Trump media and Democratic politicians for fanning the COVID Hysteria that is destroying the economy, so he will be defeated in the 2020 Presidential Reality Show®.

They have this narrow vision, as do most "We're #1" Americans, because they are junk news addicted to a dumbed down, U.S.-centric media and haven't got a clue about what's going on in the rest of the world.

For another round of COVID Madness, last Tuesday, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison freaked out the nation of 25.5 million people declaring there was a "very complex" outbreak in aged care homes in the capitol city of Melbourne.

Prime Minister Morrison said, "The situation in Victoria aged care is very complex, you have a combination of the community transmission which is widespread in Melbourne finding its way into many facilities."

Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews said 769 active coronavirus cases have been linked to several aged care centers in Victoria, which reported nine new deaths since that Monday.

"I cannot stand here and tell you I have confidence that staff and management across a number of private sector aged care facilities are able to provide the care that is appropriate to keep their residents safe," said Andrews.

This was the 28 July *ABC* news headline: "Victorian elective surgeries suspended as coronavirus cases grow by 384 with six more deaths."

The article stated, "Premier Daniel Andrews said two people aged in their 90s, three people in their 80s and one person in their 70s had died in Victoria, with four of those fatalities linked to clusters in private-sector aged care homes."

Also in the article, Victoria's Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton said the most concerning clusters remained in aged care, where the numbers were "volatile" with:

- 88 cases linked to Estia's aged care home in Ardeer
- 86 cases linked to St Basil's Home for the Aged in Fawkner
- 82 cases linked to Epping Gardens, in Epping
- 76 cases linked to Kirkbrae Presbyterian Homes in Kilsyth
- 62 cases linked to Menarock Life's aged care home in Essendon
- 53 cases linked to Glendale Aged Care in Werribee
- 51 cases linked to Baptcare's Wyndham Lodge in Werribee
- 50 cases linked to Estia's aged care home in Heidelberg
- 40 cases linked to Outlook Gardens aged care in Dandenong North
- 39 cases linked to Arcare's aged care home in Craigieburn

"There are a number of single cases in staff members in a number of other facilities," Mr. Sutton said.

TRENDPOST: *Just as with Italy, where the virus first hit after spreading from China, to across Europe and then to the world's continents, the majority of those killed by the virus are elderly people in nursing homes suffering from pre-existing chronic health conditions.*

Not only are these facts void in the mainstream media, the dictators of Australia, while stating the facts that the infirm elderly are the most susceptible to the virus, shut down Victoria and imposed draconian regulations on the entire continent.

"Australia imposes strict new virus measures in Victoria as early successes unravel," blared CNN's Sunday headline, reporting a "state of disaster" was declared on Sunday in the city of Melbourne, population five million. The second largest city in the country was locked down in a state of emergency?

"The state of Victoria, of which Melbourne is the largest city, recorded 429 Covid-19 infections on Sunday, down from 671 cases the day before, according to Victoria's Chief Health Officer Professor Brett Sutton," said CNN.

CNN went on to report, "Thirteen new deaths were also announced, bringing the state's total to 136, and there have been a total of 11,937 confirmed infections. Sunday's announcement underscores how quickly early success in containing the virus can unravel."

Declaring a "state of disaster" as of 6:00 PM Sunday, Premier Andrews's state of emergency include:

- *Police-enforced curfews from 8PM to 5AM*
- *No wedding gatherings*
- *Schools go back to online classes*
- *Only one person per household is allowed to leave home once a day to pick up essential goods. When going out, one must stay within a 5-kilometer (3.1 mile) radius of their home.*
- *Shutdown of all non-essential industries.*

TRENDPOST: *Remember, the COVID Hysteria was launched during Chinese Lunar New Year this past January. Now, eight months later, the grand total of deaths in Australia, with a population of 25.5 million people, is* ***232****… or 0.00098 percent of the population.*

Yet, despite this tiny number, and, as the Australian data proves – as with the entire world – the vast majority of those succumbing to the virus are elderly in nursing homes and those suffering from pre-existing chronic health conditions.

Despite these facts, entire nations, states, and cities are locked down… destroying the lives and livelihoods of billions.

TRENDPOST: *Rather than analyze the irrefutable data as to who is dying and why, the ineffectiveness of government mandates and their destructiveness to businesses, individuals, and the psyche of nations by the imposition of political law… the media and politicians keep pumping up the number of "cases" while ignoring the death rates; who is dying; why; and the spiritual, physical, and emotional damage the lockdowns have inflicted on the plantation workers of Slavelandia.*

Also absent from Presstitutes coverage are the deadly consequences of economic hardship, the loss of incomes, bankruptcies, and mental and physical damage caused by draconian government regulations.

GOVERNMENTS' "CURE" WORSE THAN THE DISEASE

We had forecast this when politicians first locked down nations, and now it's a fact.

Research conducted by Johns Hopkins University, which was released last week but barely got any coverage, shows the global shutdown of economies by governments has created massive suffering to millions of children worldwide.

The study specifically points to hunger and malnutrition causing the deaths of 10,000 children per month along with stunting the growth of some 550,000 more every month.

Published in the medical journal *Lancet*, it opens with: "The unprecedented global social and economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic poses grave risks to the nutritional status and survival of young children in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs)."

The report went on to state, "Of particular concern is an expected increase in child malnutrition, including wasting, due to steep declines in household incomes; changes in the availability and affordability of nutritious foods; and interruptions to health, nutrition, and social protection services."

Commenting on the report, Henrietta Fore, Executive Director of UNICEF, said, "It's been seven months since the first COVID-19 cases were reported, and it is increasingly clear that the repercussions of the pandemic are causing more harm to children than the disease itself."

While hunger and malnutrition were a serious global issue before the virus, evidence is mounting that government shutdowns have made this problem worse. Ms. Fore writes, "UNICEF reports from the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic suggest a 30% reduction in the coverage of essential nutrition services in LMICs and declines of 75-100% under lockdown contexts."

As dire as the hunger and malnutrition consequences of the global shutdown have proven to be based on known data, the Johns Hopkins University study concludes the situation will likely become even more severe:

> "The wasting-focused estimates we present here are likely to be conservative, given that the duration of this crisis is unknown, and its full impacts on food, health, and social protection systems are yet to be realized. The disruption of other health services during lockdowns will further compromise maternal and child health and mortality."

Summing up the global harm caused by hard government shutdowns, the head of UNICEF's nutrition program, Victor Aguayo, stated, "By having schools closed, by having primary healthcare services disrupted, by having nutritional programs dysfunctional, we are also creating harm."

The probability that the "cure" chosen by governments worldwide to shut down will likely end up causing more harm than the coronavirus itself is not new news.

TREND FORECAST: *One of our "2020 Top Trends" was "New World Disorder." In 2019, uprisings, riots, and demonstrations were breaking out across the globe as millions were taking to the streets in protest against lack of basic living standards, crime, violence, and government corruption.*

While many nations used the virus outbreak to shut down the protests, the issues in which they were rebelling against – economic hardship, crime, violence, government corruption – have greatly worsened as a result of the lockdowns.

As we have forecast, with few exceptions, such as Hong Kong, where Beijing is in full control, as socioeconomic conditions further deteriorate, national uprisings will evolve into civil wars, many of them spreading into neighboring countries.

SWEDEN: ON THE FAST TRACK TO RECOVERY

As we reported in last week's **Trends Journal**, Sweden has withstood the harsh backlash and constant mainstream media criticism, willing to stand virtually alone among major Western nations in refusing to shut down its society.

While some European countries which imposed harsh lockdowns are facing renewed outbreaks, the Health Agency of Sweden reports its infection rate has substantially declined. "The curves are going down and the curves for the seriously ill are beginning to approach zero," stated Sweden's Chief Epidemiologist Anders Tegnell.

TRENDPOST: *As further proof that hard data is showing Sweden's decision to keep its society more open during the coronavirus hysteria is proving successful, unlike most nations that shut down, its economy and public confidence is not tanking.*

According to a Trading Economics report, "The total industry confidence indicator in Sweden increased to 80.7 in July from an upwardly revised 68.9 in the previous month. It was the highest reading since March, as confidence improved among manufacturers (95.7 vs 89.3 in June); constructors (92.6 vs 89.8), retailers (96.7 vs 85.7) and service providers (73.3 vs 61.9)."

MEDIA SELLS HORROR HEADLINES & FEAR: MAJORITY BUYS IT

From the onset of the coronavirus outbreak, as we have detailed in the **Trends Journal**, the mainstream media has been selling Fear and Hysteria.

Indeed, this was our 28 January **Trends Journal** cover: CORONAVIRUS: 106 DEAD IN CHINA. 1.4 BILLION STILL ALIVE. THE NEW “BLACK PLAGUE”?

The point of this cover story: why are 106 deaths in a nation of 1.4 billion people – in which, for example, 1.5 million of die of air pollution-related disease each year – being reported as headline blaring news?

Fear sells

It’s because fear sells, as it has for *CNN* whose rating soared 120 percent since CEO Jeff Zucker told his staff to stay on the “COVID War” story.

And, when war drums beat, again as evidenced throughout history, the masses believe what they are being sold and obey their leaders’ marching orders.

Last week, more countries around the world began opening up their societies as deaths from the virus were on the decline.

Yet, the mainstream media continued to generate Fear and Hysteria by ramping up headlines of how many new virus cases are being reported, despite the death rates falling.

Again, as we continually report, it is estimated that of those who are infected with the virus, the recovery rate is around 99.5 percent.

Here are some examples from last week:

“**Tokyo Could Declare Emergency if Situation Worsens**”
— *Reuters*, 31 July

Note: There were zero deaths that day and 1,004 overall virus deaths in a country of 126.5 million or 0.000796 percent of the population.

“**Vietnam Records First Covid-19 Death**” — *BBC News*, 31 July

Note: Vietnam has 97.3 million people and a total of 6 deaths or 0.000006 percent of the population.

“**China Reports 127 New Coronavirus Cases, Highest Since March 5**”
— *U.S. News & World Report*, 30 July

Note: 4,634 Chinese have died from the virus out of a country of over 1.4 billion or 0.000331 of the population.

“**Germany Sees Alarming Rise in Infections**” — *CNN*, 1 August.

Note: Last week, Germany recorded 3,611 new cases in a country of close to 84 million. As we report in this week’s article, “NO MORE MUZZLES,” Germany’s death rate continuously has been declining since mid-April.

“**California Shatters Record for Deaths, Set the Previous Day**.”
— *Mercury News*, 30 July

Note: To date, 9,400 Californians out of 40 million have died of the virus or 0.0235 percent of the population.

TRENDPOST: *To keep the public in fear and their ratings rising, the Presstitutes keep selling fear by hyping “new cases.”*

Rarely, if ever, does the media report that the COVID-19 survival rate ranges between 99.32 to 99.80 percent.

TRENDPOST: *We live in a society hooked on junk food, which destroys one’s physical health, and who is mentally ill from the massive doses of junk news they consume.*

In the U.S., a Quinnipiac University poll found that 75 percent of those responding were concerned both they and their family members would be hospitalized with COVID-19.

Yet, according to data from the CDC, the rate of those in the country hospitalized with the virus is 0.1 percent. And among those test-proven positive, only 14 percent required hospital care and a scant 2 percent needed intensive care.

Even in the U.S., which has the most fatalities in the world, the CDC reported on Friday, "Indicators that track ILI and COVID-19-like illness showed decreases nationally from week 29 to week 30, with decreasing or stable levels in nearly all regions of the country."

PUBISHER'S NOTE: *In your circle of friends and family, how many people do you know who have been hospitalized? If so, were they elderly, since an estimated 70 to 80 percent of the virus victims were… or did they have compromised immune systems and were suffering from pre-existing health conditions?*

VACCINE VOLUNTEERS OR GUINEA PIGS?

Go back to last week. Pick up newspapers from the U.S. to the U.K. and you'll see the same photo: a young, masked woman with blue-black hair, glasses, and tattooed arms getting vaccinated.

This was the headline last Tuesday in the *Wall Street Journal*: "Vaccine Volunteers Given First Doses."

With most citizens around the world obeying their political leaders' strategy to follow orders until a successful vaccine appears, news came out last Tuesday that two drug companies are looking to sign up 30,000 volunteers for what they call "Phase 3 trials."

Moderna plans to conduct the injections at various sites across America, financed with $472 million from the U.S. government.

Pfizer will inject volunteers in the U.S. and overseas at over 100 sites. Washington has agreed to commit almost $2 billion to buy up 100 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine and then offer it free to U.S. patients.

As being reported by the media, while there is yet no clear evidence either of these vaccines will be successful, countries are maneuvering behind the scenes to line up dosages just in case. Even if one or both of the vaccines prove successful, it will take until the end of the year before they would readily be available to the public at large.

TRENDPOST: *All the stories run by the media referred to those getting trial vaccinations as "volunteers." (Definition: "a person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task.")*

But, are they volunteers… or paid guinea pigs?

Not one of the major stories last week mentioned whether or not the "volunteers" are being paid to get vaccinated.

According to the National Institute of Health website:

> *"Will I be paid for my participation? Yes, volunteers are compensated for travel expenses and time lost from work. These payments are not likely to fully cover your real costs, however. Payments are made after each visit. Most studies offer about $200 for vaccination visits and $175 for most other visits, but compensation varies by study."*

Regarding Moderna Therapeutics vaccine "volunteers," in an interview conducted by MIT Technology review, a 29-year-old man was asked, "How much are you being paid to be a volunteer?" He replied, "I think it's $100 per visit, so about $1,000 if you do all of them."

TREND FORECAST: *Name the country, it makes no difference. Should governments force citizens to be COVID vaccinated, it will become a major platform for an anti-establishment protest party… which propagandist Presstitutes will label as conspiracy theorists, right-wing, conservative and/or populist parties.*

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTINUES CENSORSHIP

On 27 July, a video was posted online by "America's Frontline Doctors," which the *New York Times* dismissed as "a group of people… wearing white medical coats… sharing misleading claims about the virus, including that hydroxychloroquine was an effective treatment and that masks did not slow the spread of the virus."

The *Times* article, with the headline: "Despite Safeguards, a Misleading Video Goes Viral, With Help from the Trumps," reported that within hours of being posted, the video was tweeted out by both President Trump and his son Donald Trump Jr.

Ignoring the medical facts disputing the *Times's* claims about masks and hydroxychloroquine, the *Times* stated despite being removed by Facebook, Twitter, and Google, "the video had already become the latest example of misinformation about the virus that has spread widely."

Without providing one fact, the *Times* said, "The video did not appear to be anything special." They said it went viral because it appealed to conspiracy theorists, right-wingers, and anti-vaccination proponents who want to reopen the economy.

Included in the article: "One of the speakers in the video, who identified herself as Dr. Stella Immanuel, said 'you don't need masks' to prevent spread of the coronavirus. She also claimed to be treating hundreds of patients infected with coronavirus with hydroxychloroquine, and asserted it was effective. The claims have been repeatedly disputed by the medical establishment."

TREND FORECAST: *According to the Times, how dare anyone dispute the "medical establishment"… the Big Pharma drug pushers of the universe?*

How dare anyone suggesting alternative healing remedies to a nation whose life-expectancy rates are in decline!

Most importantly, whether it is the medical, media, business, or government "establishment," we forecast new third party "anti-establishment" waves will sweep across the globe.

TRENDPOST: *As to what was behind the mainstream media ridicule of the Frontline Doctors, the social media censorship, and the efficacy of hydroxychloroquine in fighting the virus and why it is being attacked as a possible remedy, we suggest you read the 3 August article titled, "Hydroxychloroquine One More Time" by Dr. Paul Craig Roberts.*

SCHOOLS REOPEN WORLDWIDE: U.S. DEBATE RAGES ON

Who is dying from COVID-19?

Ask the World Health Organization (WHO): "COVID-19 impacts the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions most severely."

Yet, when fighting the COVID War, like most others, politicians and mainstream media sell lies and fear rather than truth and facts.

And now there is the great debate as to whether or not to send children back to school.

In March, when the coronavirus panic first spread out of China and across the globe, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) estimated the global shutdown of schools caused some 1.5 billion children to begin schooling from home, which is over 91 percent of all children.

And yet, by the end of June, *Science* magazine reported over 20 countries had reopened schools. (Sweden, Taiwan, and Nicaragua had not closed their schools.) In addition, day care centers in those dozens of countries were open and, for the most part, outbreaks were rare.

As stated in a 29 July article in *Time*,

> "Research into French primary schools released in June found no evidence of transmission by children in schools; and research from Iceland published in April found that children under 10 were less likely to test positive for the virus than those over 10. Another small study published in July, based on data from hospitals in the Chinese cities of Wuhan and Qingdao, found that, among 68 pediatric COVID-19 patients, 96% were infected by another adult in their household, and there was no evidence that the children transmitted the virus to others."

In addition to data coming in on the success of many countries reopening schools without causing significantly increased outbreaks of the virus, studies such as one published on 30 June in the *JAMA Health Forum* underscore the significant consequences of keeping students home, including "regressions in academic gains, increase in rates of depression and anxiety and lack of oversight for children suffering from food insecurity and disabilities."

The Weill Cornell Medicine website states, "27 million U.S. parents depend on school for childcare, and are limited in going back to work if their children are learning from home."

The authors of the study add, "In the United States alone, approximately 36 million workers have become unemployed, and more than 50 million children are out of school for the remaining academic year."

Fear not Facts

Despite the negative repercussions of keeping children home from school, the fear factor in the U.S. continues to dominate. An example is the *New York Times* headline in its 30 July "Education" section: "States Saved Thousands of Lives by Closing Schools in Spring, Study Says."

The study, however, notes, "These figures do not account for uncertainty in the model assumptions and the resulting estimates."

Dr. Julie Donahue, Professor of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh, co-wrote an editorial responding to the above study. In the study, Dr. Donahue wrote, "I think we have to be incredibly cautions when interpreting estimates from a study like this. In particular, I think it's important to emphasize that we really can't isolate the impact of school closures from other interventions."

Dr. Donahue also emphasized, "Even if these numbers were accurate or valid, we don't know how much of the effect would be derived from reducing contacts among kids at school, versus reducing contacts among parents who have to stay home from work because their children are out of school."

Acknowledging the limitations of the study, the doctor noted, "I do worry that these large estimates of the effect of school closures will lead people to give up because it is going to be challenging to open schools… I do worry that some districts will look at these numbers and say, well, it's just too hard and it's not safe to reopen."

Open Up

While the CDC has vacillated on subjects such as mask wearing, it is steadfast in the need to reopen schools. On 23 July, the CDC published this on its website:

> "Parents are understandably concerned about the safety of their children at school in the wake of COVID-19. The best available evidence indicates if children become infected, they are far less likely to suffer severe symptoms. Death rates among school-aged children are much lower than among adults. At the same time, the harms attributed to closed schools on the social, emotional, and behavioral health, economic well-being, and academic achievement of children, in both the short- and long-term, are well-known and significant.

> Further, the lack of in-person educational options disproportionately harms low-income and minority children and those living with disabilities. These students are far less likely to have access to private instruction and care and far more likely to rely on key school-supported resources like food programs, special education services, counseling, and after-school programs to meet basic developmental needs."

The debate in the U.S. around reopening schools remains divisive and fear-driven. On 28 July, *CNN* produced a video report on teachers protesting against reopening of schools, including the narrator saying, "These teachers are driving home the message that with the coronavirus skyrocketing, it's no time to put kids back in the classroom."

The *CNN* headline on its website posting the video read: "'I don't want to go to school and get Covid': Some kids scared as adults debate the risks of reopening."

Last week, school teachers marched in Washington, D.C., to protest schools reopening, putting fake body bags at the doorstep of the school district office and carrying signs that read: "RIP Favorite Teacher," "Killed in the Line of Duty," and "How Many Will You Let Die?"

The latest poll from EducationWeek.org last month reveals about two-thirds of public school teachers and administrators are in of favor keeping schools closed this fall.

TREND FORECAST: *As we have noted, as global economies decline and online courses increase, there will be strong, new political movements for governments to lower school taxes. The argument will be that with online learning, far fewer teachers will be needed and all costs related to brick-and-mortar school buildings will be substantially lower, thus, taxes should be sharply cut.*

TREND FORECAST: *"New Millennium" education is a mega-trend we had forecast.*

And, as we had forecast at beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak when schools across the globe were shut down, it signaled the onset of a 21st century online learning system, which, back in 1996, Gerald Celente had forecast as "Interactive U" in his bestselling book, "Trends 2000."

Trends are born, they grow, mature, reach old age, and then die.

"Interactive U" has just been born. The new education system that will replace the current one, which was invented by the Prussians at the onset of the Industrial Revolution, will offer great investment rewards to existing and start-up companies which create the new learning systems and continue to update them.

At this time, Indian companies are leading much of the trend, since online learning has deeper roots in that nation.

NEW YORK STATE OF MIND: SINKING

For years, reports have been issued warning of dire consequences to the "greatest city in the world" due to rising seas caused by climate change. The Lower Manhattan Coastal Resilience survey, released a little more than a year ago, predicted 37 percent of the lower island will be subject to storm surges by 2050 and sea levels might rise as high as six feet by 2100.

Climate change? Forget about it!

The "Big Apple" economy and psyche are already underwater… from the surging tides of mental fear and financial despair caused by political authorities imposing draconian restrictions without any solid scientific backing to deal with the virus.

It is estimated from March to July, the politically imposed lockdown has cost NYC $173 million per day.

The "city that never sleeps" is virtually asleep. The great tourist destination is void of tourists. Broadway is shut down. The restaurant/hospitality sector is a shadow of its former self with hundreds of thousands of workers, and those from supportive industries, out of work.

The Community Service Society reports, “Between mid-March and mid-July, more than 1.5 million people in New York City filed for unemployment, a staggering number that exceeds the cumulative number of initial claims filed in most states over the same period. In June, the national unemployment rate fell to 11.1 percent but New York City’s rate rose to 20.4 percent.”

As we’ve been reporting over the past weeks in the **Trends Journal**, the city and state, thanks to the continued lockdown rules imposed by Governor Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio, continue to make it financially impossible for most businesses to profitably function.

Ego Trip

Exemplifying his focus on punishing the little people while sucking up, bending over, and taking tens of millions in bribes and payoffs (i.e., campaign contributions) from the Wall Street Gang and Big Money powers, in one of his latest dictates, last Wednesday, King Cuomo ordered the liquor authority to suspend licenses from 12 bars for “egregious violations of pandemic-related Executive Orders.”

With crime on the rise and more gun violence in NYC than in nearly a quarter century, the Governor sent the State police and Liquor Authority to conduct compliance inspections. Fifty-five bars and restaurants were served violations that could cost up to $10,000 in fines for each violation and possible suspension of their licenses.

The “egregious” violations included the “Ladies Sports Bar” in Jamaica, which was served violations because eight patrons were drinking booze inside the premises and an employee was without a facial covering, “both in clear violation of the Governor’s Executive Orders.”

Another violation was at “Grill on the Hill” in Manhattan, citing, “Patrons at two separate tables outside the premises consuming alcohol without food, in addition to two patrons standing at the bar inside the premises.”

The devastation caused by the shutdown of New York City has literally crushed thousands of businesses. It is estimated that some 3,000 small businesses in the city are out of business as a result of the lockdowns.

The iconic Strand book store, whose slogan is "18 miles of books," and which the *New York Times* has called "the undisputed king of the city's independent bookstores," was forced to lay off more than 85 percent of its over 200 employees. The bookstore's owner said this was the first time the store had to let so many employees go in its 93-year history.

Empire Coffee & Tea, which initially opened during the Theodore Roosevelt administration and later added a store in Hoboken, N.J, closed its NYC store in April.

A New York City eatery in business since 1873 has a simple inscription in its menu: "The Paris Café – Forever."

"Forever" has now come to an end.

Owner Pete O'Connell has terminated his lease, unable to pay months of rent and other fixed costs with only a trickle of customers.

Offices Empty, Street Guns Loaded

The *Wall Street Journal* reported on 28 July that over 90 percent of Manhattan's employees continue to work from home. CBRE Group, which manages 20 million square feet of office space in the borough, reports as of last week, less than 10 percent of workers in their downtown office buildings have returned.

JPMorgan Chase reports only about 20 percent of its office space being used. Microsoft has announced the soonest it would consider reopening its NYC office is October, and that will depend on the level of coronavirus spread.

While city office buildings are quiet, the streets are noisier with gunfire as police report through 26 July, NYC had recorded 745 shootings, an increase of almost 75 percent from the same months in 2019. Homicides were up almost 30 percent.

TRENDPOST: *Exemplifying his idiocy, in response to the shootings a week ago Sunday in which two teens were among the seven dead, Mayor Bill de Blasio blamed the escalation in gunfire on the "huge backlog" of firearm cases because the courts were not fully open due to his and the governor's lockdown orders.*

He was rebutted by Lucian Chalfen, spokesman for the Office of Court Administration, who stated the courts were getting back to full speed and had nothing to do with the shootings. And the mayor's call for gun buy-back events, where citizens can turn in their guns for cash vouchers, has been shown to be ineffective in the past, according to research by Harvard's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy.

Make Life Miserable

In another "Executive Order" dictate, Governor Cuomo, who has convinced his fellow governors in New Jersey and Connecticut to follow suit, announced that any resident coming from states showing a rise in coronavirus cases must self-quarantine for 14 days… and give authorities contract tracing data to follow their movements.

In June, the three politicians listed nine states, but now it is up to 34 states including Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico.

Penalties for not abiding to the 14-day self-quarantine restrictions can result in fines up to $2,000.

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL MIGHT DROP THE BALL

Last Friday, commissioner of Major League Baseball Rob Manfred issued a warning that the entire league will shut down if the coronavirus spread is not more effectively contained.

The season finally opened on 23 July, but every time a report surfaced that a player or anyone involved with a team contracted COVID, the league reacted sharply.

When 18 Miami Marlin players tested positive on 31 July, the team's next six games immediately were cancelled. Days later, commissioner Manfred announced this "was not a nightmare situation." Reportedly, he stated to the league's Players Association that the entire season might get cancelled if the spread of the virus continues.

Less than two weeks into the shortened season, reports of new virus cases have caused 19 postponements over the last 11 days. The St. Louis Cardinals were forced to postpone a game despite only two of its players testing positive.

ESPN reports a number of city governments have complained to major league baseball that players have been seen without masks when not on the field, spitting, and not adhering to social distance protocols.

In one case, an entire ballpark was closed down despite no player contracting the virus. The Philadelphia Phillies closed Citizens Bank Park after two staff members tested positive. One was a coach; the other a member of the clubhouse staff.

TRENDPOST: *As we have noted, name the sport, name the business, name the school… we continue to emphasize how people in power impose arbitrary, non-science backed rules and regulations on society, which have sucked the joy and freedom out of life.*

More than just Americans and baseball, fans across the globe have not only lost the enjoyment of their favorite sports… but the new ABnormal rules have destroyed all the businesses that depend on these seasonal sporting events.

From suppliers of food products to the sale of sports items, to local bars and restaurants surrounding the stadiums that depend on fans, entrepreneurs big and small are going broke and going out of business.

TRENDS IN GEOPOLITICS

HONG KONG: CHINA TOWN 2.0

The **Trends Journal** has been reporting on the Hong Kong protests in detail since they first broke out in June 2019.

As we have reported in recent issues, the new, harsh national security law imposed on Hong Kong on 20 June by China's National People's Congress was designed to clamp down on any renewal of the months-long street protests throughout 2019.

Last Friday, the city's chief executive and strong ally of Beijing, Carrie Lam, announced the upcoming legislative election scheduled for September would be postponed. Using the COVID crisis as a remedy for postponing elections, Ms. Lam said, "It's really a tough decision to delay, but we want to ensure fairness, public safety and public health."

Ms. Lam cited among the main issues behind the postponement were concerns of spreading the coronavirus with some three million residents expected to vote.

The previous day, a leading pro-democracy activist, Joshua Wong, confirmed he and other colleagues were told they would not be allowed to run when the next election is rescheduled. He tweeted, "Clearly it is the largest election fraud in HK's history."

Prior to the events of last week, the political opposition to the pro-Beijing elements of the city's government claimed social distancing rules imposed to deal with the coronavirus were primarily a strategy for stopping the momentum of the pro-democracy movement.

Ms. Lam countered any restrictions were “purely on the basis of protecting the health and safety of the Hong Kong people and to ensure that the elections are held in a fair and open manner.”

From Washington

U.S. Secretary of State “Regime Change” Mike Pompeo declared last Thursday that the Hong Kong elections “must be held.”

Ignoring the dictators and monarchies Washington supports, Pompeo blared, “The people of Hong Kong deserve to have their voice represented by the elected officials that they choose in those elections. If they destroy that, if they take that down, it will be another marker that will simply prove that the Chinese Communist Party has now made Hong Kong just another Communist-run city.”

In the Hong Kong election on 25 November 2019, in the midst of the contentious, ongoing street protests, pro-democracy candidates overwhelmingly defeated those allied with the Beijing government, taking control of 17 of the 18 councils.

TRENDPOST: *It is important to note that since the virus struck neighboring China in January 2020, there have been only 37 coronavirus deaths in Hong Kong, a city of some 7.5 million people, or a mere 0.00049 percent of the population.*

Moreover, as Gerald Celente had forecast when the virus first broke out in China this past January, Beijing would use the COVID-19 to achieve what they were unable to accomplish before the virus stuck Wuhan: ***Stop the Hong Kong Protests.***

Since Beijing imposed its rule of laws on Hong Kong, that has now been accomplished… putting the city under the full dictate of the Chinese government.

TRENDS-EYE VIEW

NOT SUCH A PRETTY PENNY

With consumers spending less during the shutdown and more using plastic payment cards when they do shop, coins are in short supply.

So now the penny's enemies see another chance to end its life.

The one-cent coin costs two cents to produce, costing the U.S. Mint $70 million more in 2018 than the coins were worth.

In 2019, pennies made up 59 percent of the coins the U.S. minted.

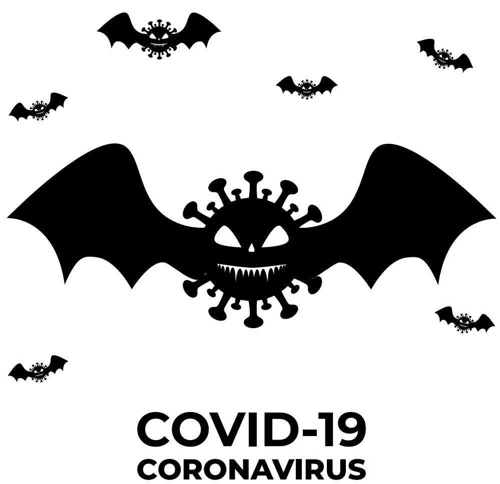
The penny's detractors also point out the coins make more work for retailers and banks than they are worth and that many people just toss them in jars and fail to spend them.

Australia, Britain, and Canada already have stopped making pennies.

TREND FORECAST: *First coins will become extinct currencies, then paper money over the coming decades, if not sooner, as the world turns from "DIRTY CASH TO DIGITAL TRASH"… a trend we have written extensively about.*

TRENDS IN HI-TECH SCIENCE *by Bennett Daviss*

STUDY: COVID COUSINS LYING IN WAIT



For as long as 70 years, bats have been carrying the genetic precursors of the COVID virus, according to a team of Chinese, European, and U.S. scientists that reconstructed the virus's evolutionary history.

The study found the COVID structure enabling it to lock onto human receptors is shared by other coronaviruses found in horseshoe bats living in remote parts of Asia and Africa.

The family of viruses has the ability to infect a range of human cells, which made it easy for one member of this virus clan to jump to humans. Other members of the virus family "may do so again," the study said.

The current crisis "will not be our last coronavirus pandemic," the research team said. "A much more comprehensive surveillance system needs to be put in place to catch viruses like this when case numbers are still in the double digits."

Another investigation by a consortium of universities and nonprofit groups quantified the benefits of doing so.

Researchers concluded the virus and economic shutdown will cost the world $8.1 to $15.1 trillion, as much as 500 times more than the $22 to $30 billion nations could invest annually to reduce the spread of new diseases out of tropical areas, they said.

The study recommends using the money to expand wildlife anti-poaching and trade monitoring programs; end the wild meat trade in China; develop programs to reduce deforestation – which drives animals out of the wild into contact with humans – by 40 percent; and create methods to prevent the transmission of diseases from wild animals to livestock.

The scientists also urge the creation of a global library listing the genomes of known viruses, which could allow scientists to quickly spot the source of new viral outbreaks and quickly devise the best ways to treat and contain the illness.

TRENDPOST: *COVID-19 has been an introduction. There are lessons to be learned from it that can show us how to snuff an outbreak without panicking the world and crashing the global economy.*

ROBOT CHEMIST RUNS 688 EXPERIMENTS IN EIGHT DAYS

Literally working night and day, a robot at the University of Liverpool performed 688 experiments over eight days to find the best way to extract hydrogen gas from water.

Hydrogen gas is a potential vehicle fuel and has hundreds of industrial applications.

Rather than designing a specialized robot, a pair of human chemists at the university mounted a conventional robotic arm on a mobile base and fitted it with grippers, sample trays, and other gadgets and programmed it to operate various lab machines, including a gas chromatograph.

The robot ran the 688 tests 1,000 times faster than a human researcher could have, the developers estimate.

The mechanical scientist finished with a process that pulls six times more hydrogen from a given volume of water than the process it was given to start. It's not a viable application, however, because the process consumes one of the chemicals it uses.

The robot, which the researchers call a "proof of concept," could be outfitted with more chemistry information and greater computing power so it can make better decisions as it experiments.

The developers hope to sell their robotic lab tech to other chemists.

TRENDPOST: *The combination of artificial intelligence, computers that learn from experience, and ever-increasing computer power will create a structure of innovation, discoveries, and scientific advances that will outpace our ability to assimilate change even more than today's already has.*

NEW SOFTWARE COULD LET COMPUTERS PROGRAM THEMSELVES

Computer scientists at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Intel, and MIT have created software that could ultimately enable computers to write their own programs.

Initially, though, its purpose is to save human computer programmers frustrating hours, or sometimes days, of work finding and fixing bugs among thousands or millions of lines of code in software programs.

The new software – called Machine Inferred Code Similarity (MISIM) – works in a similar way to natural language programming, which allows a computer to understand instructions written in words instead of symbols.

MISIM can look at a line of computer code and understand what it's telling a computer to do. It then can search through millions of other computer programs to find code telling a computer to do the same thing.

By comparing a draft of a new computer program with software with a similar intent and known to be working correctly, MISIM can flag lines of code that might contain errors. It also can suggest corrections or changes to the code to streamline or otherwise improve it.

Ultimately, MISIM could receive a written message from a person that describes something the person wants a computer to do. MISIM then would comb through other programs, piece together, and sequence lines of code from other sources that would achieve the outcome.

TRENDPOST: *MISIM is another step along the path of artificial intelligence that eventually will enable computers to become autonomous – not only writing their own programs, but also designing their next generations of hardware without human input.*