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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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05.01.2021

Donald Trump is Not Hungry

Of one thing we can be sure. Donald Trump is not hungry. This is what the popular press -the occasional purveyor of fake news- tells us. And there is no reason not to believe it now, when it tells us that the EIC (Emperor-in-Chief) feasts on cheeseburgers and ice cream in his mansion of Mar-a-Lago. Food for the kings, as they say.

He now seems to be having the best of times, when we see him elegantly gallivanting in his golf cart, ready to heroically surmount the deadliest obstacles. That this happening as we see the longest lines for food handouts since the Depression is of no concern to him. He only looks at the big picture: himself. Rome is burning but Nero is calm.

In fact, he is so calm, that he organized a New Year's Eve party at his Floridian hide away where, true to form, he left for Washington leaving his disappointed guests to mingle instead with Eric and Don Trump Jr. while Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump were missing in action. Oh, well, one cannot have everything in life...

Those 500 guests that remained at the event were not practicing physical distancing, and were seated 10 at a table, no masks required. In the meantime, as reported by the Tampa Bay Times, as this super-spreader event was taking place in the Mar-a-Lago ballroom, Florida had a record number of coronavirus infections, with more than 17,000 new cases.

There are now more than 350,000 dead, an inconceivable -and unforgivable- figure for a country with the costliest health care system in the world. Hospitals are overrun, basic supplies are limited, vaccination rates to contain the pandemic is running too slow and people are under unbearable stress, leading some of them to suicide.

Homicide rates are increasing in the country. Murders are up by double-digit percentages not only in big cities such as New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, but smaller cities are also showing the effect of the pandemic. According to data from the National Commission on Covid-19 and Criminal Justice, homicide rates and gun assault began to increase in late May.

Although there is no clear explanation for the rise, experts believe that unemployment and financial hardships in poor neighborhoods already under strain are behind these increases. “Unemployment and the housing insecurity that come along with Covid, the general stress, the marital strife that we’ve seen, with higher rates of domestic violence and higher rates of divorce, have all spiked during periods of Covid,” said Dr. Phillip Atiba Goff, co-founder and CEO of the Center for Policy Equity, a research center at Yale University.

Those who voted for Trump hoping that some of his billions would magically trickle down to their pockets, remain frustrated. Him and his cronies created an economy only for the more affluent.

The U.S. stock market ended 2020 at an all-time high, making the wealthy richer and, predictably, the poor poorer since, according to the inalterable laws of capitalism, when somebody gets much richer due to eschewed government stimulus, somebody else has to pay for it.

As this is happening, Rome keeps burning. Historian Dio Cassius wrote that Nero was dressed in cithara (a forerunner of the lute and later of the guitar) player’s garb while Rome was burning. Present times demand a different attire. Today he would be dressed in a golf player’s outfit.

JANUARY 4, 2021

Dr. Cesar Chelala is a co-winner of the 1979 Overseas Press Club of America award for the article “Missing or Disappeared in Argentina: The Desperate Search for Thousands of Abducted Victims.”