

A Plague on All our Houses

by Fergus Downie



Slowly but surely the Germans are thinking, and the doubts are mounting. Largely overlooked by a feral media employing every spare hack to agitate the most base and morally lethargic instincts, Professor Bakhdi's Cassandra warnings on the continent's lockdown hysteria have until now been playing out to deafening silence, but with money once again dying, facts are now beginning to break out. At a modest estimate Europe is facing an unprecedented recession with a protracted GDP contraction of nearly 8% and when one looks beyond the morbid sensationalism of the yellow press it is difficult to understand why anyone is convinced it was worth it even in the shallowest humanitarian terms. In Germany just over 8000 have succumbed to the virus, in a population of 85 million this is barely a blip in hospital statistics and for all the shop worn urban myths of an indiscriminating plague it is overwhelmingly

selecting those who might have fared even worse from a colder winter. Compare that with the pent up misery and avoidable deaths of missed cancer screenings alone and it should have given pause for thought. On the healthy old moreover the deficits are severe – by the most sober estimates of Professor Bakhdi the loss of social contact will take decades off their lives (we do after all, all die – why is this shortening of life not comparable with an elderly man succumbing to this disease). Given the frenzied and undignified descent on our care homes, the media prepared for this defining moment by a long immersion in humanities degrees and with a rudimentary grasp of science and hard maths, has largely failed to give this a second thought, but if they had more curious minds they might have considered this is in large part the effect, not the cause, of the lockdown. After months of unnecessary sacrifice the strategy of herd immunity is effectively back in play, but no one has considered the basic category error in restricting its spread amongst the strong and throwing it upon the weak to spread like wildfire. The care homes should have been isolated and closed not used as hospital discharge sites to spread the disease. We've ignored these inconvenient details (the Swedes didn't) and turned age into more than a number. Who says one man can't make a difference? We got here by listening to a charlatan academic forecasting half a million deaths on the basis of a risible 1% death rate now sheepishly toned down to a tiny fraction (even in New York City, home to vulnerable huddled masses and the world's epicentre of the virus, it's 0.28% at most. Even they didn't need Battleship Potemkin).

You don't in any case have to be a highbrow to find segways into reality. The costs are obvious to anyone who has a pulse or an IQ above 20. A Nigerian I work with, like many of his compatriots, is a faithful servant of the Lord, and has been quietly working overtime on the food banks largely because the government has sequestered the pensioners who ran it, turning them at the drop of a moronic incantation from public spirited

stalwarts of the Big Society into conscripted objects of unnecessary and unseemly compassion. This is a loss that is difficult to measure in numbers but it is real and should be weighed in the balance. A life is only valuable if it is worth living and there are things worse than death not least the horrors of regimented bingo and aerobics forced into the indignity by a society in thrall to the cult of declining youth. The old in any case have patiently stood in line for the reaper – young neurotics by contrast have fled it, only daring to venture outside with ridiculous facemasks a second's lucid thought would have told them were redundant. So much for our radiant tomorrows.

None of this has stopped the sickly cult of the NHS working its charms – I wrote not too long ago of the eerie quiet in UK hospitals and it's not got any busier since. A lot of it about. Hospital utilisation has nowhere reached crisis point in the OECD countries and even the Government has had to concede its own Potemkin village, erected at melodramatic speed by the army, has closed with virtually zero trade in death. Ever fertile in vacuous soundbites the grinding down of meaning continues – 'stay at home, save lives, protect the NHS' turned to 'stay alert'. Against what? A cough? An obnoxious yuppie cantering in lycra and a head band (a grotesque sight at any time).

Its hideous stuff but much of this is finding an ear amongst the weak spirited. Almost a third of Britons want the lockdown to continue even after the phantom has disappeared. It is hardly a surprise. The ordeal, truth be told, is suffering with a millennial abyss and its supporters are lazy shits in search of a free lunch. I should know, I'm one of them. Local authority managers have taken to attaching the ominous email acknowledgement 'I am working prioritising key service delivery in the current crisis, and may take some time to respond to non-urgent communications'. They're doing bugger all – the busiest arm of any council – its housing departments

– are earning a well-earned reprieve because of the moratorium in evictions, and social services are dealing only with emergency child protection matters. Risk assessments (i.e. the frenetic documenting of things you couldn't have done in case someone dies) abound, in terms of concrete accomplishments very little apart from diversity impact assessments and dumbed down blitz spirit vacuities from Chief Executives prattling on about mental wellbeing amongst their stuff. And we can do it all from home.

The feebleness of the sacrifice is as striking as the cynicism and it says something about this country. We invited big brother into our castles and turned ourselves into wretched little quislings leaping at the opportunity to rat on their neighbours clandestine walks. Some countries get the government they deserve.