

GLEANINGS II - 805
Thursday April 11th, 2019

Quote of the week - “There are no, and there will be, no second class citizens, and there are no second class voters ... We are all equal in the voting booth, Jews and Arabs, citizens of Israel” - Israeli President Reuben Rivlin at a March 11th conference commemorating the Israel-Egypt peace treaty (signed on March 26th, 1979 by then Egyptian President Anwar Sadat¹ & Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and co-signed by US President Jimmy Carter) on what he called the “entirely unacceptable remarks about the Arab citizens of Israel”²

Germany’s February trade figures came in “a bit light” - While the consensus forecast was for exports to be down 0.5% & imports 0.6%-, their actual outturn was -1.3% & -1.6% respectively. Meanwhile, China’s reported exports were up 14.2% YoY, vs. 6.5% expected - *But there are several problems with the latter. All Chinese data are suspect on general principle, because of probable overzealous bottom-up reporting & top down data manipulation for political purposes. Just one month ago, on March 11th, officials reported that, after the New Year’s holiday had depressed them, exports were now growing at a 40% YoY rate. Imports were down 7.6% YoY, way down from the -0.2% expected. And M2 money supply growth rate was 8.6% & new loan volume 1.69TR yuan vs. 1.25TR yuan expected, thereby further leveraging an already highly leveraged economy.*

Global crude oil consumption outlook - According to the latest monthly IEA report “As far as 2019 is concerned, amongst the analyst community there is an extraordinarily wide divergence as to how strong growth of *global demand for crude oil* will be ... We maintain our forecast of 1.4 million bpd (*to 100.6MM bbld, the first time ever over 100MM bpd*)³ but accept there are mixed signals about the health of the global economy, and differing views about the likely level of prices” (*based on different perspectives on the outlook for US crude stockpiles, OPEC supply cuts, Venezuela & Iran sanctions, and fighting in Libya*). *It also notes in that report that in the latest month Venezuelan oil production had been 870,000 bbld, down 270,000 bbld MoM, 600,000 bbld YoY & 75% from two years ago - given the apparent trend in global economic growth, the risk in its 1.4MM forecast is likely on the downside.*

Interesting StatsCan chart entitled Consumer Price Information 1998-2018 - During this 20-year period the cost of tuition fees went up 120%, of city taxes, buses & transport generally 85%, of school text books 70%, of childcare services 65%, and of all goods & services 30%,

¹ Who 2½ years later paid for doing so with his life.

² While he didn’t mention Netanyahu by name, everyone knew who he was talking about; for ‘Bibi’ had taken to Facebook the day before to remind voters “Israel is not a state for all its citizens. According to the Basic Law we passed, Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people only”, following that up later that day by telling Cabinet “The state of Israel is not a nation state of all its citizens”. But the Basic Law he refers to, is the one the Knesset passed on July 19th. 2018 62-55, with two abstentions, that is better known as the “Nation State”-, or “Nationality”-, Law, while there is a much older (1992) Basic Law of Human Dignity and Liberty that “to protect human dignity and liberty ... and anchor the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state” was accorded “super-legal” status, giving the Supreme Court the authority to disqualify any law contradicting it. And unfortunately for Netanyahu, the Court announced last January 1st that challenges of the constitutionality of the Nation State Law will be heard by an 11-member justice panel to decide if, in whole or in part, it violates the 1992 Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty (*and the Court’s record of being impervious to political considerations, may not bode well for Netanyahu’s Nation State Law*).

³ To put this in perspective, the EIA (US Energy Information Agency) recently bumped its forecast of the growth in US oil production this year up from 1.35MM-, to 1.43MM-, bbld, in which case it would meet the **entire** increase in global demand expected by the IEA.

whereas the cost of cars was flat, and that of clothing **down** 5%, of toys & games 10%, of home entertainment 50%, and of digital devices & equipment 90% - *In other words, the price of things we need went up much faster than that of things we want. The explanation seems to be that the price elasticity of our wants is negative & that of our needs positive; or to put it in layman's language, consumers have little bargaining power in paying for their needs but must be convinced to buy the things they want.*

Iranian flood scene - Dozens of villages & towns have been evacuated in Southern Iran with more rain, flooding & *land slides* forecast for the regions bordering Iraq, where there are many rivers & dams. In the last month continuous floods have killed 70 people, destroyed infrastructure & displaced *hundreds of thousands* of people. According to Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazil, flooding in Khuzestan province affected 10% of its population. And more rain is forecast everywhere, incl. the Northern provinces where flash floods have displaced thousands, & the Western province of Lorestan where the Deputy Minister of Roads & Urban Development says "200 bridges and 400 kilometers of roads were 100% destroyed".

And the Iranian Red Crescent Society is blaming the US sanctions on financial transactions for interfering with the flow of aid from abroad to help alleviate the resultant human tragedies.

It's always risky to count your chickens before they're hatched - Netanyahu is basking in the glory of having won the election ⁴. But he still faces one big hurdle : it's up to President Reuben Rivkin to decide, after consulting with Knesset members (which could take as much as a week), who to invite to form the next *coalition* government; and, although a member of the Likud, he 's no Netanyahu fan; so the possibility cannot be entirely ruled out (although it would be monumental shocker) that, Israeli politics being what they are, leader(s) of one of more of the small parties now included in Netanyahu's supporting cast may decide to switch allegiance (*for personal gain or ensure the PM's prosecution for bribery & corruption proceeds with dispatch?*).

Palestinian turnout - Palestinians accounted for nearly 20% of the 6.4MM eligible voters. In 2015, their turnout was 64% (vs. 70% overall) while this time around, as many Palestinians chose to boycott the election, by 1530 hrs it was just 20% (& 44% by the time the polls closed). But in so doing they may well have shot themselves in the foot & gained a 'Pyrrhic victory'; for if the 'missing' 260,000 Palestinian voters had voted, it would have made a big difference in two ways : it would have doubled the Palestinian seats in the Knesset to ten, to the benefit to the Blue and White Group's seat tally there &, more importantly since the Israeli system is purely PR, have lessened the weight of the Netanyahu supporting-, & leaning-, vote across the board.

Trump fiddling with the Department of Homeland Security management's top echelon to remake it in his own image - Meanwhile, it has no Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, Secret Service Director, FEMA Director, ICE Director, Inspector-General, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Privacy Officer & Customs and Border Protection Commissioner - *the incumbents apparently hadn't displayed enough personal loyalty to him &, what had angered him most, in some cases had the nerve to warn him that what he wanted them to do was "against the law"* - One can only assume this was the way he ran his companies, with a fitful regard for the law. The only ray of sunshine in this is that it seems to be emboldening more, & long overdue, 'Trump pushback' among mainstream GOP politicians.

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With 30.0% & 36 seats (up from 30 in the last Knesset) vs. the Blue and White Group's 29.2% & 35 seats.

US-China trade negotiations - According to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on April 10th, they have "pretty much agreed on an enforcement mechanism (*that has been one of the thorniest issues*) ... If we can complete this agreement, this will be the most significant changes to the economic relationship between the US and China in really the last 40 years." - *According to China Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang on April 11th (only?) "significant progress" had been made. And, if Mnuchin is referring to the 1972 Nixon visit to China, he was way off base; for that was a major diplomatic achievement that had little, if anything, to do with economics, if only since then China's economy was just a pimple on the global economy's butt. And, if a deal is near, it's not necessarily good news; for it will enable Trump to launch another trade squabble, this one with Europe (& talks with Japan, with which the US has only US\$67BN, trade deficit largely offset by a surplus on the export of services) will start next Monday.*

US Deficit - For the first six months of this fiscal year (that ends September 30) it was US\$691BN up 'only' 15% YoY, with revenues up 0.7% but spending 4.9% - *The best thing to be said about this is that the expected deficit growth rate for the year as a whole has been 40%.*

USMCA/'New NAFTA' - Six months after it was concluded, the consensus is growing that the NAFTA successor USMCA deal between the US, Mexico & Canada to regulate their US\$1+TR trilateral trade will not come to a vote in Congress this year & possibly not even before the November 3rd, 2020 election (*by which time all three signatories may have changed*).

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RUSSIA SIGNALS OPEC AND ALLIES COULD RAISE OIL OUTPUT IN JUNE **(Reuters, Olesya Astakhova)**

- Kirill Dmitriev heads Russia's state direct investment fund and in 2016 was the first oligarch to suggest a deal with OPEC *to limit oil production & since then* has been a key defender thereof despite the *growing* pressure from Russian oil companies to end it. And, while in recent months he has been echoing Saudi Arabia's line it was still too early to terminate it, on Monday April 7th he signaled that Russia wants to hike production because of improving market conditions & shrinking stockpiles, explaining this would not be "the end of the deal but a confirmation that the participants will continue their coordinating efforts when it is important not only to cut, but to increase, output depending on market conditions". And while Khalid al-Fatih, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources has long been on the same wave length, talking about the need to continue the production cuts until at least the end of the year, that same day, out of the blue, he opined the market was "moving towards balance" & the picture would be clearer next month (i.e. well before the June 25th OPEC+ meeting).

And since then Khalid has changed his tune even further, saying that, while "it would be premature to say whether a consensus exists among OPEC and its allies to extend oil supply cuts, ... it might be considered at the (May 19th) JMMC meeting⁵ ... I think May is going to be the key." - The market has tightened & the price of Brent crude risen to US\$70+ from below US\$60 at yearend 2018 due to the unrest in Libya and the US sanctions on oil exports from Iran &

⁵ The JMMC (Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee) was founded on January 2017 to monitor compliance with the OPEC+ *production cut* commitments. Its original membership consisted of Saudi Arabia & Russia as Co-Chairs, along with OPEC members Algeria, Kuwait & Venezuela and non-OPEC member Oman. But last March 22nd its membership was changed/expanded by Oman being replaced by Kazakhstan and OPEC members Iraq, Nigeria & UAE being added.

Venezuela [although there has been White House talk that maybe it should ease it's pressure on third parties not to buy Iranian oil to reduce upward pressure on oil prices; for President Trump wants lower-, not higher-, oil prices(for YTD US gasoline prices are up 10%)] - But what is really driving all this is that the continued US shale oil & gas output growth has made the US the world's No. 1 oil producer (pushing them into 2nd & 3rd place respectively) and has been exporting oil, thereby eating into their global market share. And while the pundits claim US shale oil output growth will slow down, last December 1,429 new wells were drilled in 'the largest shale US basins' while only 1,211 were completed, increasing the inventory of wells drilled there but still 'uncompleted' to a record 6,594 (& since drilled but uncompleted wells are a 'sunk cost', oil companies have every incentive to complete them, especially since they would still make bags of money at oil prices well below the current US\$64 WTI. And what seems to have escaped notice is that US LNG exports have gone from virtually zero three years ago to, at last report, 1.5MM BOED (Barrel of Oil Equivalent per Day), making it the world's third-largest LNG exporter after Australia & Qatar) & that in 2018 US (shale?) natural gas production was up 20% YoY to 77.4 BCF/13MM BOED.

WHAT A LATE CYCLE SLOWDOWN MEANS FOR PROFIT MARGINS (Black Rock Investments, Elga Bartsch)

- We believe global *economic* activity should slow down this year. Such a deceleration in economic growth will cast a shadow on corporate profit margins, and a combination of margin compression & slower GDP growth could combine this year into a full-blown US-led global *corporate* earnings recession. Some top-down earnings forecasts have thus been revised to stall speed although the bottom-up estimate consensus remains upbeat.
- We expect a fall in margins this year & potentially an outright earnings recession, and that the *bottom-up* consensus earnings estimates are too high, potentially leaving both equity valuations & credit markets exposed. For many years profit margins have always contracted sharply in the late cycle phase (*that the global economy is now in?*); so "we believe margins have likely peaked and expect a material contraction this year".

Black Rock's position in the global financial system means that its views merit consideration; for at last report, with AUM of US\$6.3TR, it was the world's largest investment management firm whose asset base was about 85% of the DJ30's total capitalization & greater than the GDP of all but two of the world's economies ⁶. And the writer, a graduate of the University of Hanover & LSE, with a Ph.D. from Germany's University of Kiel, was until eight months ago Morgan Stanley's London-based Global Co-Head of Economics & its Chief European Economist.

MMT FINDS AN EMBRACE IN AN UNEXPECTED PLACE : WALL STREET (NYT, Patricia Cohen)

- This package of eccentric ideas, aka Modern Monetary Theory - that annual deficits are too small & the US can always pay off its debt by printing money, *mostly advocated by second rate economists, economic history ignoramuses and/or far-left stumblebums* - has received a remarkable level of vitriol. Heavyweight economists have churned out scathing attacks, business titans like Laurence A. Fink (*the CEO of Blackrock*) & Microsoft's Bill Gates have dismissed it as "garbage" & "crazy talk" and, when the

⁶ The 2019 GDP of the US is expected to be US\$21.5TR and those of China US\$14.5TR, Japan US\$5.2TR, Germany US\$4.2TR & the UK US\$3.0TR.

University of Chicago's Booth School of Business asked top scholars about it, 28% said they disagreed with it & the other 72% that they did so "strongly".

- But on Wall Street some people agree, saying it offers important & overlooked insights & that they use it to build economic forecasts & trading strategies. They include Jan Hatzius, Goldman's Chief Economist, who claims "I find some of their ideas useful", Paul A. McCulley, a former Chief Economist at Newport Beach CA-based PIMCO who says that contrarian ideas have "for all my career been a very useful framework for analysis" and MMT & other orthodox approaches helped him to "get it right", and Richard Koo, Chief Economist at the Tokyo-based Nomura Research Institute said he had told his clients for years that "even with huge budget deficits in the US, interest rates would ... come down, not go up".

Throughout history, printing money has been tried time & again as an 'easy' escape from excessive debt-driven financial troubles, most dramatically so in Germany in the post-WW I era when some workers got paid twice a day so they could buy something over the lunch hour that would be more expensive by the end of their work day, a decade or so ago, in Zimbabwe where in its final stages the local currency became so worthless that bank notes nominally worth multi million of units of currency weren't worth the paper they were printed on (so that for the past decade it has been using the US dollar as its local medium of exchange), and now seems to be given another go in Venezuela. But all ended the same way, "in tears" (as will Venezuela's) ⁷. As to the three sources cited, Goldman Sachs has long been the biggest financial whore house on Wall Street (& the other two aren't even on Wall Street), McCulley's comments suggest not that he believed in MMT but that he only 'used' it as a proxy for politicians' fiscal gullibility, while Koo lives in a country where the government has for decades been spending far more than it took in, with the mama-sans buying its paper for old age income security reasons, something that they now in growing numbers no longer want-, need-, or can do since they are now in an old age dissaving mode [so Japan's death-defying 236% (up from 70% 30 years ago & 25% higher than Greece's) national debt-to-GDP ratio chickens may soon come home to roost].

NORTH KOREA THREATENS TO SCUTTLE TALKS WITH THE US AND RESUME TESTS **(NYT, Choe Sang-hun)**

- In Pyongyang, Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui told a group of diplomats & media types that the personal relations between Mr. Kim & Mr. Trump were "still good and the chemistry ... wonderful" but that Secretary Pompeo & NSA Bolton had created an "atmosphere of hostility and mistrust" that had thwarted the top leaders' negotiations in Hanoi last month (after which Kim, during his 2,800 mile, 3½ day train trip home, apparently expressed serious doubts *to his officials* about continuing talks with Mr. Trump, asking them "For what reason do we have to make this train trip again?" And she went on "We have neither the intention to compromise with the US in any form nor much less the desire or plan to conduct this kind of negotiation ... Whether or not to maintain this moratorium (*i.e. the 'self-imposed one' on testing nuclear weapons & long-range missiles*) or not is the decision of our chairman of the state affairs commission (*one of Kim's many titles*) ... He will make his decision in a short period of time."
- Secretary Pompeo dismissed this as rhetorical speed bumps & said "We are hopeful that we can continue ... conversations and negotiations", while Mr. Bolton denied any suggestion he & the Secretary had undermined the negotiations. But the Hanoi meeting

⁷ And I have in my possession some bond certificates of the Weimar Republic and Hungarian & Russian railroads that my maternal grandfather invested in & that, complete with most of their interest coupons still attached, I would happily sell to any buyer for a fraction of their face value.

revealed a huge gap between the two governments' positions : North Korea insists on moving in phases, with the US lifting the sanctions imposed since 2016 in exchange for it dismantling its various Yongbyon facilities, while Mr. Trump rejects that & demands more substantial steps towards denuclearization (due to his officials' belief Kim has other elements of his nuclear program in secret locations around his country & concern he would use any new revenue flows to *further* subsidize his nuclear weapons program).

Small wonder Izumi Karamitsu, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs has warned "the prospect of nuclear war is higher than it has been for generations" (following in the footsteps of similar warnings by, among others, Putin & the former Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mike Mullen). For Washington & Pyongyang are like 'two ships passing in the night' &, while in the Cold War days their captains were sensible people, the two now with their finger on the 'nuclear buttons' are 'nutcases' with an underweight experience in global diplomacy & an overweight sense of their own importance. And the recent North Korean changes among Kim's advisers will only consolidate his power further.

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Brett Kavanaugh's summer teaching gig - It recently became known the controversial now US Supreme Court Justice has been hired by Fairfax VA-based George Washington University to teach this summer in the UK, along with Jennifer Mancott ⁸, a course on the US Constitution at, of all places, Runimede (where the Magna Carta was birthed in 1215). Needless to say this was controversial & prompted protests by the MeToo crowd, with university to acknowledging the controversial nature of this hire (because of the earlier sexual assault allegation against him) but maintaining it will nevertheless continue to supporting sexual assault survivors.

Stephen Moore & Herman Cain - These are Trump's latest picks to fill the two vacancies on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors (*his last two didn't fare so well, even though they were much better class individuals than either of these two bozos* ⁹). Cain, a 73 year-old Afro-American, has a BSc in Math & an MSc in Computer Science and spent his career at Pillsbury, ending it as its President & CEO of Godfather's Pizza from 1986 to 1996. Then he was for three years President of the National Restaurant Association [during which time he was the target of sexual allegations by four women that he has always denied {although he has acknowledged the Association did make financial settlements (*on his behalf?*) with them}] ¹⁰. He attempted to run for President in 2000 & the Senate in 2004, and launched a credible Presidential bid in 2011, with Stephen Moore advising him, on the back of his 9-9-9 tax proposal (9% business-, 9% personal income -, & 9% sales tax, that he said would be a 9-0-9 tax for poor people since they don't pay income tax), until the sexual allegations roiled the waters for him & he withdrew. And Stephen Moore has credibility & financial blemishes. He "only" has an MA in Economics &

⁸ A. law professor at its Antonin Scalia Law School who was a Kavanaugh law clerk when he was on the US Court of Appeals for the DC circuit.

⁹ Marvin Goodfriend is, & has been since 2005, an economics professor at Carnegie Mellon's Tepler School of Business & prior to that had been the Richmond Fed's Director of Research for 12 years, while Nellie Liang is an economist at Brookings and prior to that had been a research economist, & the Director of its Financial Stability Office, at the Fed. Both went through the Senate hearing routine but remained in limbo thereafter until Liang withdrew her name last January and Goodfriend's nomination has presumably fallen by the wayside by these nominations.

¹⁰ One was on TV recently & reported 'He put his hand on my leg and moved it towards my genitalia' and when I protested said "You want a job, don't you?"

“never published a ‘peer-reviewed’ article in a journal”, and advocates Arthur Laffer’s 30 year-old, & long-since debunked, supply-side economics. He started his career as an intern at the Heritage Foundation & has been back there since 2014 (while originally marketed as its “Chief Economist”, he’s now a “Distinguished Visiting Fellow”). During the Reagan years he was Research Director of his Privatization Commission & in 1999 founded-, & became President of-, the still existing Club for Growth that during his tenure was fined US\$300,000 by the Federal Election Commission for failing to register as a political committee & to report its spending in the 2000-, 2002-, & 2004 elections (after which the Club fired him). Along the way he spent ten years at the libertarian Cato Institute, worked on the Dole Presidential campaign in 1996 & was an adviser to Cain in his failed 2011 run at the Presidency. In 2008, when the Fed was rapidly cutting interest rates in response to a weakening economy that would morph into the ‘Great Recession’, he went on record as saying “I happen to believe we should be raising rates, not cutting them” & in 2014 wrote an op-ed piece in the Kansas City Star entitled What’s the Matter with Paul Krugman in which he used data that were found to be erroneous, which he then corrected with other data that were found to be equally flawed. He was an adviser to Trump’s 2016 campaign & the next year advised (as did Larry Kudlow) his Administration on the 2017 tax rewrite, and in 2018 co-authored with Laffer a book entitled Trumponomics, endorsed by Trump himself, that argued his tax plan would result in GDP growth of 6% per year without increasing the budget deficit ¹¹. Finally, after he switched in 2017 from Fox News to CNN, he defended Roy Moore on the air after his run for a Senate seat from Alabama faltered on accusations he had molested a teenage girl, tried to ‘slut shame’ Stormy Daniels & came out with the zinger that “scientists lie about climate change to get really, really, really rich.” And he apparently wasn’t (*very well, if at all?*) *vett*ed by the White House before Trump nominated him; for very shortly thereafter it became public knowledge he owed the IRS US\$ 76,000 in unpaid taxes, interest & penalties with respect to the 2014 tax year (that he claimed was due to a “mistake”), while more recently word came down he had been in contempt of court in 2012 for not paying his ex-wife US\$300,000 in alimony & child support, which resulted in the judge ordering his house sold to satisfy his debts upon which, after several police officers & a locksmith executed a court-sanctioned break-in to change its locks & prepare it for sale, he settled with his ex-wife for US\$217,000 (which she said was “enough”) - *In the end, however, this will all be for nought for Trump (which will make him angry); for in a best case scenario the Senate will just let these nominations wither on the order paper, as they did with Goodfriend’s & Liang’s (and does anyone really think that in the 21st century’s MeToo era the Senate would be so politically dense as to confirm a purported sexual predator?), while in a worst case scenario, i.e. they were confirmed, the Fed would deal with such low life by ‘putting the wagons in a circle’; moreover, monetary policy is decided not by the Board but by the FOMC; and it has 12 voting members, so the views of two Presidential ‘moles’ on the Board would unlikely affect the Fed’s monetary policy decisions, especially since the other three Trump-nominated Governors seem to have become so encaptured by the central bank mindset as to have failed to display the personal loyalty to Trump he had taken for granted, to the point he has been looking for ways to fire Chairman Jerome Powell for his failure to get the Fed to ‘march to his drummer’.*

Yujing Zhang - On March 28th this 32 year-old Chinese woman arrived on a flight from Shanghai at New Jersey’s Newark Liberty International Airport, 15 miles from Manhattan. Two days later she flew to Palm Beach FL & took a room at the 75 year-old “British Colonial-style” Colony Hotel one block away from the beach (where room rates start at US\$360 a night) before proceeding to the nearby Trump-owned Mar-a-Lago’s resort. There she told a Secret Service

¹¹ In the real one the US economy last year grew by 2.9% & the deficit it was up 17% YoY , and is expected to be up more in the one that’s now half over, which means that as a proportion of GDP could go from 3.4% in FY17 via 3.8% in FY18 to as high as 4.9% in FY19.

agent she was there for a private “UN Friendship Event” organized by two locals, Cindy Yang & Charles Lee, that she had paid US20,000 to attend (but that apparently had been “canceled”), showing him fliers (in Chinese) that advertised it for that date & that included a picture of the President’s sister ¹² (that the promoters had promised would attend so attendees could ‘speak to the President’s family about Chinese and American foreign economic relations’). To make a long story short, she managed to get through several security checks & was all over the resort for quite a while until finally someone ‘smelled a rat’ & the Secret Service detained her. After that, it was all downhill for her; for she has been in a Florida jail ever since & in court twice, with the public defender as her legal counsel & the public prosecutor calling her an “extreme flight risk” since she has no ties whatever to the US and “lies to everyone she encounters”. For once she was searched she was found to have on her person a flash drive with malware on it (that, when a Secret Service agent put it in his computer to see what was on it, immediately started to automatically download itself on it) as well as a ‘signal detector’ (a device to detect hidden cameras), and then, when the Secret Service searched her hotel room, it found thousands of dollars worth of US & Chinese currency and a plethora of credit cards, passports, cell phones, USB flash drives & SIM cards - *So the FBI has now gotten into the act by launching a possible Chinese espionage attempt investigation, the Secret Service has been made to look inept, if only because it didn’t record its discussions with her, the Mar-a-Lago security has been shown as full as holes as Swiss cheese, if only because nobody twigged on the presence on her of the USB drive & the signal detector when she went through a metal detector, and President Trump’s nose is out of joint because the security arrangements at Mar-a-Lago have been proven to be hopelessly inadequate & its staff stands accused of being not sufficiently security conscious, and the possibility his freedom to do there whatever he feels like, business-, & personal activity-, wise, may be threatened.*

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The 81 year-old Maryanne Trump Barry, a retired US Circuit Judge of the Philadelphia-based US Court of Appeal for the Third District.