



ALESSANDRO GRASSANI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Chairs are spaced far apart at Milan’s city hall, Palazzo Marino. Italy has overtaken China as the country with the highest death toll.

## Early Missteps Set Italy’s Path To Catastrophe

*This article is by Jason Horowitz, Emma Bubola and Elisabetta Povoledo.*

ROME — As Italy’s coronavirus infections ticked above 400 cases and deaths hit the double digits, the leader of the governing Democratic Party posted a picture of himself clinking glasses for “an aperitivo in Milan,” urging people “not to change our habits.”

That was on Feb. 27. Not 10 days later, as the toll hit 5,883 infections and 233 dead, the party boss, Nicola Zingaretti, posted a new video, this time informing Italy that he, too, had the virus.

Italy now has more than 53,000 recorded infections and more than 4,800 dead, and the rate of increase keeps growing, with more than half the cases and fatalities coming in the past week. On Saturday, officials reported 793 additional deaths, by far the largest single-day increase so far. Italy has surpassed China as the country with the highest death toll, becoming the epicenter of a shifting pandemic.

The government has sent in the army to enforce the lockdown in Lombardy, the northern region at the center of the outbreak, where bodies have piled up in churches. On Friday night, the authorities tightened the nationwide lockdown, closing parks, banning outdoor activities including walking or jogging far from home.

On Saturday night, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced another drastic step in response to what he called the country’s most difficult crisis since the Second World War: Italy will close its factories and all production that is not absolutely essential, an enormous economic sacrifice intended to contain the virus and protect lives.

“The state is here,” he said in an effort to reassure the public.

But the tragedy of Italy now stands as a warning to its Euro-

*Continued on Page 8*

### TRACKING AN OUTBREAK

**SPECIAL SECTION** Here are answers to your basic questions about life under the coronavirus.

**OLYMPICS** Athletes are questioning organizers’ insistence that the Games go on. **SPORTSSUNDAY**

**A QUIET CITY** New York became eerily empty as restrictions increasingly took hold. **PAGE 6**

## Trump Is Faced With Crisis Too Big for Big Talk

By **PETER BAKER**  
and **MAGGIE HABERMAN**

WASHINGTON — During his campaign for the White House in 2016, President Trump’s advisers briefly tried to run through with him how he would address a large-scale disaster if he won. What, for instance, would he have done during Hurricane Katrina?

“I would have fixed that,” Mr. Trump replied with certitude, referring to the government’s bungled rescue and recovery efforts, according to a campaign official who was present for the exchange. “I would have come up with a much better response.” How? He did not say. He just asserted it would have been better and advisers did not press him to elaborate.

### A Lifetime of Conflict, and Now an Unseen, Genuine Threat

Mr. Trump is no stranger to crisis. He has spent a lifetime grappling with bankruptcy, fending off creditors, evading tax collectors, defending lawsuits, deflecting regulators, spinning reporters and dueling with estranged wives, usually coming out ahead, at least as he defines it. But these were crises of his own creation involving human adversaries he knew how to confront. Nothing in his background in business, entertainment or multiple marriages prepared him for the coronavirus

pandemic now threatening America’s health and wealth.

Mr. Trump’s performance on the national stage in recent weeks has put on display the traits that Democrats and some Republicans consider so jarring — the profound need for personal praise, the propensity to blame others, the lack of human empathy, the penchant for rewriting history, the disregard for expertise, the distortion of facts, the impatience with scrutiny or criticism. For years, skeptics expressed concern about how he would handle a genuine crisis, and now they know.

“When he’s faced a problem, he has sought to somehow cheat or fix the outcome ahead of time so that he could construct a narrative that showed him to be the winner,” said Michael D’Antonio, a

*Continued on Page 12*



GRANT HINDSLEY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

At Life Care Center in Kirkland, Wash., 35 people who tested positive for the coronavirus died.

## The Rapid Road From Fevers to Final Goodbyes

By **JACK HEALY**  
and **SERGE F. KOVALESKI**

KIRKLAND, Wash. — Loretta Rapp, 79, was easy to spot as she zipped through Life Care Center nursing home in her electric wheelchair, dressed in one of her bright muumuus.

It had been hard for her to leave her apartment after she had a bad fall last year. But she was a no-nonsense woman who had raised three children, and she was trying

to make the best of things. She went to physical therapy. She devoured detective novels. At the skilled-nursing facility tucked next to a row of Douglas firs in suburban Seattle, she was elected president of the residents’ council.

Life Care made an effort to keep things fun. There were shopping excursions to the Fred Meyer and lunch trips to Olive Garden, a recent afternoon with “cute and cuddly animals.” The Honky Tonk Sweethearts, a country group, came in for a show early in Febru-

ary. Ms. Rapp spent her days buzzing the hallways, visiting newcomers and cheering up bed-bound friends.

Then people started getting sick.

Not sick as what happens all the time in a nursing home, the bad flus and septic infections and old bones that will not heal. This was different. In the last few days of February, people’s temperatures started going off the charts. Some could not breathe. Then came

*Continued on Page 14*

## A RACE TO DELIVER CRITICAL SUPPLIES TO MEDICAL TEAMS

### A Recession Appears Certain as a Virus Wreaks Havoc

By **NELSON D. SCHWARTZ**

The American economy is facing a plunge into uncharted waters.

Economists say there is little doubt that the nation is headed into a recession because of the coronavirus pandemic, with businesses shutting down and Americans being shut in. But it is harder to foresee the bottom and how long it will take to climb back.

Greg Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, says the economy is assured of a recession — at least two consecutive quarters of economic decline — with output falling 0.4 percent in the first quarter and 12 percent in the second. That would be the biggest quarterly contraction on record, but Goldman Sachs upped the ante on Friday, saying it expected a 24 percent drop in the second quarter.

“This is not just a blip,” Mr. Daco said of the outlook. “We’ve never experienced something like this.”

The abruptness of the descent — and the near-lockdown of major cities — is unheard-of in advanced economies, more akin to wartime privation than to the downturn that accompanied the financial crisis more than a decade ago, or even the Great Depression.

“Even during previous recessions,” noted Ellen Zentner, chief U.S. economist at Morgan Stanley, “no one’s been told you can’t go outside or you can’t gather.”

Smaller companies will be hit harder than large ones because of their limited access to credit and less cash in the bank. “There will be a swath of small businesses that simply won’t be able to survive this,” Ms. Zentner added.

The result is an economy that has gone from full-speed-ahead in January to a full-on freeze. Econo-

*Continued on Page 11*

### Trump Resists Use of War Act to Compel Companies’ Help

*This article is by Rachel Abrams, Jessica Silver-Greenberg, Andrew Jacobs, Vanessa Friedman and Michael Rothfeld.*

President Trump on Saturday sought to assure an anxious American public that help was on the way to overwhelmed hospitals, and that private companies had agreed to provide desperately needed medical supplies to fight the fast-spreading coronavirus.

But Mr. Trump resisted appeals from state and local officials and hospital administrators for more aggressive action, saying he would not compel companies to make face masks and other gear to protect front-line health workers from the virus.

Speaking at a White House briefing with Mr. Trump, Vice President Mike Pence said the federal government had placed orders for “hundreds of millions” of the N-95 face masks that can shield medical workers from the virus. Mr. Trump said the clothing company Hanes was among those that had been enlisted to start churning out masks, although the company said they would not be the N-95 masks that are most effective in protecting medical workers.

Neither Mr. Trump nor Mr. Pence would say when the masks would be ready. And it is unclear whether enough new masks and other protective gear will be available before health care facilities start getting overwhelmed by a flood of infected patients. More than 21,000 cases of the coronavirus have been confirmed in the United States, and that number is expected to soar in coming weeks.

As more of the nation goes into an unprecedented lockdown — businesses shuttered, one in four

*Continued on Page 15*

## Mistakes and Internal Strife Hobbled Sanders Campaign

By **ALEXANDER BURNS**  
and **JONATHAN MARTIN**

In mid-January, a few weeks before the Iowa caucuses, Senator Bernie Sanders’s pollster offered a stark prognosis for the campaign: Mr. Sanders was on track to finish strong in the first three nominating states, but Joseph R. Biden Jr.’s powerful support from older African-Americans could make him a resilient foe in South Carolina and beyond.

The pollster, Ben Tulchin, in a meeting with campaign aides, recommended a new offensive to influence older black voters, according to three people briefed on his presentation. The data showed two clear vulnerabilities for Mr. Biden: his past support for overhauling Social Security, and his authorship of a punitive criminal justice law in the 1990s.

But the suggestion met with resistance. Some senior advisers argued that it wasn’t worth diverting resources from Iowa and New Hampshire, people familiar with the campaign’s deliberations said. Others pressed Mr. Tulchin on what kind of message, exactly, would make voters rethink their support for the most loyal ally of the first black president.

Crucially, both Mr. Sanders and his wife, Jane, consistently expressed reservations about going negative on Mr. Biden, preferring to stick with the left-wing policy message they have been pressing



ERIN SCHAFF/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Senator Bernie Sanders is far behind in the delegate count.

for 40 years.

The warnings about Mr. Biden proved prescient: Two months later, Mr. Sanders is now all but vanquished in the Democratic presidential race, after Mr. Biden resurrected his campaign in South Carolina and built an overwhelming coalition of black voters and white moderates on Super Tuesday.

While Mr. Sanders has not ended his bid, he has fallen far behind Mr. Biden in the delegate count and has taken to trumpeting his success in the battle of ideas

*Continued on Page 23*

**THE MAGAZINE** Senator Sanders remained steadfast in his vision, and forced a party’s reckoning.

### INTERNATIONAL 17-20

#### Nuclear Offer Hard to Refuse

A Russian state company is building reactors across the world, reaping for Moscow profits and influence. **PAGE 17**

#### Conflicting Advice Over Iran

President Trump’s top officials are divided on whether to ramp up military action in the region. **PAGE 20**

### T MAGAZINE

#### Space, Form, Line

From the elegantly austere to the joyfully overstuffed, the Design Issue looks at spaces that play with adding and taking away volume.



### NATIONAL 21-23

#### Mustangs Out of Control

With too many animals on public lands, the federal wild horse program is short of money or easy solutions. **PAGE 21**

#### Voting, Now? We Did It Before

A flu-ravaged nation managed to hold an election in 1918: not without incident, but with democracy intact. **PAGE 22**

### SUNDAY BUSINESS

#### Venezuelan Coder in Peril

When Gabriel Jiménez used his passion to build the Maduro regime a digital coin, called the Petro, he nearly paid for it with his life. **PAGE 1**

#### Small Businesses Need Help

The economy relies on thousands of local operations that need a lifeline, Sendhil Mullainathan writes. **PAGE 8**

### BOOK REVIEW

#### Hilary Mantel Is Back

Thomas Mallon reviews “The Mirror and the Light,” the final book in a series that began with “Wolf Hall.” **PAGE 1**



### OBITUARIES 25-27

#### Country Music Megastar

Husky-voiced Kenny Rogers, 81, sold more than 100 million records. His hits included “The Gambler,” “Lady” and “Islands in the Stream.” **PAGE 25**

### SUNDAY REVIEW

#### Maureen Dowd

**PAGE 9**

### SUNDAY STYLES

#### Now on a Screen Near You

Digital dance raves. Streaming soundbaths. Book readings by phone. The housebound are nimbly pivoting to virtual social gatherings. **PAGE 1**

### ARTS & LEISURE

#### A Manifesto for Museums

Venerable museums closed by the pandemic should seize the moment to take stock of themselves — and change, Holland Cotter writes. **PAGE 12**



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