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Sometimes it takes a bit of patience to put together our Journal; finalising an article, paginating it, submitting galley proofs, ensuring consistency, double-checking dates and facts, moving figure “Xyz” three pages downwards, and moving “Zyx” two pages upwards, it all ensures that my brain is still in working order. I could certainly do with a deputy editor: are there any applicants?

Meanwhile, Covid is still a big newsmaker internationally; it is a fact that it has caused postal slowness and other complications such as my postal box in the United States Virgin Islands. Since early March 2020, the borders between the US Virgins and the British Virgins have remained closed making it impossible for me or any friend to go to St. Thomas to empty my PO Box. I do not have the faintest idea of what has happened to my mail after 14 months of lockdown. So, if you thought you had problems caused by Covid, this is another take, possibly the less harmful or fatal but something I could say “forget about it”.

Another rude awakening came recently with purchases made at a Swiss auction being mailed and then being blocked by customs expecting me to pay over 20% duty and 22% VAT on top of a purchase where the auctioneer had billed a 20% commission. The funny part is that most collectors believe that the best bargains are easier to get by buying at an auction. I told a friend that I will only buy from foreign dealers and auctions if I travel to a given country and I take the ‘goodies’ with me when I return to my country. A friend warned me that I may run into problems with customs and I can see it could happen. What aggravates me is that the VAT and customs duty paid may end up in money paid by the treasury for travel expenses of government ministers and high officials.

For example, it has been divulged on Facebook and in newspapers that a prominent Italian minister likes to go to expensive hotels, supposedly because in his position it is the only chance while the treasury pays for his squandering. Sounds familiar?

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