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“...this is a time of painful progress for nations. Each nation evolves in its own way: one by war, another by calamity, by labor, by knowledge, or by *podvig*.¹ Each nation bears its own karma. This karma can be light, but many nations carry a heavy and difficult karma.

You must tell people that in this evolution of peoples *there can be no return to the past*. Everyone who realizes the immutability of evolution, has already made his own destiny easier. Everyone who understands the law of labor in the service of humanity helps his own ascent. Everyone who learns to love to serve the evolution of peoples also serves his own evolution. Thus, a great responsibility turns into a light burden...”

Supermundane 772

Greetings Friends!

I was recently in the little town of Sirolo – “Pearl of the Adriatic”, as it is called locally – for a short visit. It is a lovely little place, perched on the top of a promontory overlooking the sea. March is in the off-season, and as a result there was hardly anyone there. Most of the shops were closed, but signs of life were beginning to stir. It was the beginning of spring, after all. Everywhere there were the sounds of saws and hammers, work vehicles parked along the narrow streets, getting the town ready for the tourists, who would begin to arrive in the following weeks. The place is quite a tourist destination, and it is where many people stay when they want to visit Ancona, which is only a short distance away. Ancona is a large port city, and remains an important seaport. Forget trying to find parking there, and driving there is an experience. But Sirolo is also where people stay when they want to visit Loreto, which is a place of pilgrimage and home to one of the many ‘Black Madonnas’. This particular one found her home there by virtue of her house being transported there ‘on the wings of angels’ from its original location in Nazareth, the latter now known as the ‘Arab capital of Israel’. So goes the legend.² But, it is a place of great spiritual potency and many miracles have been reported there. We visited the shrine, and it is quiet an evocative place, not to mention the magnificent art and architecture of the cathedral built over the house of the Madonna.

The Black Madonna brings to mind the birth of Jesus in the Christian tradition, and subsequently the birth of the Christian religion. In esoteric astrology the full moon of the Aries interval is called the “Festival of the Risen Christ”³, and from the date of that full moon the Easter festival is determined in the Christian faith. At the full moon of Aries each year the allegory represented is that Christ triumphs over death and rises from the tomb after three days. But, from astrology and astronomy we know that on the first day of Aries the sun triumphs over darkness – i.e., the daylight hours become longer than the nighttime hours. As for the resurrection, at the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere (the first day of Capricorn) the sun is at its lowest point in the sky and the daylight hours are shortest, and for three days the sun appears to stop moving southward. In other words, it is ‘in the tomb’ for three days, after which, on the 25th of December, it begins to rise again in the sky, or to move northward. The sun is ‘reborn’ in Capricorn. The sun-God/Christ is born on the 25th of December.

Seeming disparities in symbolism and dates for the resurrection aside, there are three themes here: birth, death and resurrection. Aries is related to Capricorn through these themes, and both of them are related to birth into new states of consciousness. We die to the old and ‘born again’, or reborn, into higher states of being and consciousness. We could see both Aries and Capricorn representing two types of birth – literal/physical and spiritual rebirth – and death as well. There is too much to go into here to explain it all, but such themes are found in common with all the stories of the great world Teachers and religions throughout the ages. Christian symbolism, along with most religious

symbolism, is based in astrological lore and ancient astronomy, little as Christians, for example, may like to admit it, or even be aware of it. But, there is a larger point to be made: Since these themes and astronomical/symbolic themes are found in common with most if not all the great world religions, past and present, then these themes are common to all of us. They represent universal truths. And because of that, no one religion or belief system can claim to be ‘The One Truth’, or the only way to approach one’s divine nature. And, to go even further, if one is religiously inclined, then it matters little which faith one follows. If one knows the underlying truths, then all faiths lead to the same goal – the realization of our own divine nature and power, the liberation from need for reincarnation and emancipation into universal consciousness, or full enlightenment. Our theme for this letter is Aries, though, and with Aries we are dealing primarily with spiritual rebirth.

Aries is equated with resurrection, because in the spring new life appears in the flora and fauna in the northern hemisphere. We get a new lease on life, to use a modern phrase, and the promise of renewal is everywhere evident. The cold winter months gone, everyone goes outside, activity is seen everywhere and the cold and darkness of winter are shaken off. We feel that we can once again move forward with our plans. We feel renewed in the spring. These concepts are so deeply imbedded in our collective consciousness that we never think about them, but it is for the reasons just mentioned that we equate Aries with beginnings and renewal, at least in the northern hemisphere. So, with Aries we commence the three most important full moons of the year – those of the Aries, Taurus and Gemini intervals – the northern spring in other words.

One of the keys to why the Aries and Taurus full moons in particular each year are so important (leaving Gemini aside for now) lies in the idea that Aries, along with Taurus and Capricorn, are the three catalytic signs in the zodiac.⁴ In essence, they indicate very significant changes and realizations in terms of people’s consciousness. Aries represents the commencement of a new outlook and possible path in life. Taurus represents the cementing of the focus of one’s life toward the realization of enlightenment, and Capricorn represents the ultimate attainment that has been sought along one’s soul path. After Capricorn, attainment of one’s spiritual goals proceeds very rapidly indeed, and then with the following Aries experience, one is released into a still-higher state of being. The reason these signs are said to be catalytic is that experience through them brings events that induce changes in outlook in a way that no other signs do. We are transformed through experience in those signs. Since we are discussing Aries in this letter, one of the keys to understanding the outlook of the Aries type comes from understanding the sign’s rulers – Mars, Mercury and Uranus.

The esoteric motto of Aries is, “I come forth, and from the plane of mind, I rule.”⁵ Aries is ruled by Mars, Mercury and Uranus in order from the most personal to the greatest collective influence. Ultimately, Uranus as ruler of Aries is so far beyond our present consciousness that it need hardly be considered. However, the Uranian influence through Aries brings one in contact with the spiritual center of our planetary life, known in esoteric astrology as Shamballa. Mercury, being the esoteric ruler, places the Aries type firmly in the mental arena, but in a way that induces mental conflict, along with the Martian influence, and initially because of it. With Aries, we have the idea: “Do not suppose I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have come not to bring peace, but a sword.”⁶ since we have borrowed a Christian theme here. The ‘sword’ in this case refers to the discriminating intellect, which cuts through illusions and old customs. This is a theme that is very strongly with us in these days, with all the focus on what is real and fake in the media, for instance, and is brought forward since we have Uranus and Eris in Aries at this point in time.

When Mercury first becomes a guiding influence in one’s life, then there is conflict generated between the idea of the way things should be and the materially-focused habits that are part and parcel of everyday human existence. Basically, Aries brings in a conflict between the personal desire nature (Mars) and a more ideal expression (Mercury), thus inducing a fiery struggle between the *status quo* of one’s life and the vision of a better way forward. Mercury makes the Aries type an

'ideas person'. The Aries type is usually full of ideas anyway, but when the focus is more spiritual rather than personal, we find the true forder between the customary and the new, for the next steps forward along the path. The Aries in this case is not so much focused upon self as they are upon the social good. The Aries type under the rulership of Mercury seeks to inspire people onward spiritually through the power of the mind.

Aries brings with it the opportunity for realizing greater spiritual freedom, whether in one's own life or for the greater public, and often for both. As such, it is a pioneering influence. People with Aries rising are notables such as Willy Brandt, Ezra Pound, John Lennon, Joan Baez, Hunter S. Thompson, Johannes Brahms, Errol Flynn and Lee Iacocca. People with the Sun in Aries are notables such as Vincent van Gogh, Paloma Picasso, Dane Rudhyar, Spike Milligan, Dirk Bogarde, Samuel Hahnemann, Otto von Bismarck, Lady Gaga, Leopold Stokowski, Elton John, Tennessee Williams, Erica Jong, Hugh Hefner, Marlon Brando and JP Morgan. We could argue whether some of these people were or are more spiritually focused, but all of them have pushed the boundaries of public mores of the time, and have caused controversy. The Aries type is often found at the center of some sort of controversy, as are Taureans and Capricorns. But until we have a wider vision that can see the entire picture of karmic and social interplay, it might be best to resist pointing accusing fingers at people. All of these people listed have railed against restrictions in some way, their own and social, have sought novel ways of expressing themselves, even pioneering new modes of expression, and many of them became social activists. We might not agree with their personal choices, but that is no reason to dismiss their other good works for the whole.

Given the combination of Mars and Mercury in the Aries type, then, we can perhaps begin to understand their impatience, their insistent nature, their novel outlook, their passion for what they do and their passion for life. The Aries, when the divine fire is lit within them, is a firebrand, is indefatigable, careless of how other people see them, and the champion of causes. They are the herald of the new in whatever walk of life they are found, a thorn in the side of the established order and often gleefully so, and outspoken in their world view. In being thus, they transform our world view, and we are thankful for their influence, aggravating as they might seem at the time. And I say that with the greatest affection. So, these points having been made, let's have a look at a little astrology and then move on to the immediate changes we see before us in the world situation. I had originally planned to take a broad world overview for this letter, but in light of events in the past days, the focus has of necessity become significantly more focused.

The ingress figure for the spring quarter (Aries – Gemini) this year reflects a serious tone, indicated firstly by a square between the Sun and Saturn, the latter of which is also conjunct the Moon. It is not going to be a happy quarter on the world stage, and it has already started with strident tones. There will likely be litigation, reduced public confidence, surprising and sometimes damning information coming out about world leaders, etc. The Moon/Saturn conjunction is a sobering combination anyway, and being square to the Sun introduces quite a bit of tension. But it is also a combination, with the square to the Sun, that is found with people who get things done and who do not let emotional concerns get in the way of their efforts. That Moon/Saturn conjunction was also trine to the Uranus/Eris conjunction (yes, that latter conjunction is still with us). Venus was approaching its retrograde conjunction with the Sun. Mars was moving up to the conjunction with the Trump administration's ascendant, which it crossed on the last day of March. Since then, the whole Russia scandal has been ratcheted up yet again, with further allegations on both sides of the political aisle and with the administration saying it may have to 'go it alone' on the question of North Korea's nuclear program and with Syria. So, there we have the tone of the entire quarter.

The full moon of Aries takes place at 6:42 UT on the 11th of April this year (4:42 PM AEST). The figure shows quite a disruptive influence, with the full moon axis conjunct the Uranus/Eris conjunction and forming a t-square with Pluto at the apex. As such, the Aries interval, from now until the Taurus full moon, will be a very clarifying, revealing period, and with more than a bit of

upset in the mix. It will reflect strongly in the nations that carry the Aries/Libra axis in their personality expressions: Germany, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden), India and Austria. This full moon will also perhaps invoke the souls of the nations with the same influences in their soul expressions: Argentina, China, Romania and Finland. With all the rising nationalism in many parts of the world, it will be interesting to watch the outcomes of elections in countries such as Germany and India, and in most of the other countries listed, for instance. The Dutch just had their elections and the ruling party lost six seats to Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom, a nationalist party in the Netherlands, for example.⁷ Wilders has been called the 'Dutch Donald Trump',⁸ if that gives any indication of what he represents. The solar activation of the 20 Mar 15 eclipse signaled the London terrorist incident of the 22nd of this month, along with several other attempts in the West, as well as a major bombing incident in Baghdad.⁹ Solar activations will last for several days and take place twice per year for any eclipse.

In addition to the factors just listed in the full moon figure, we see Mars conjunct Ceres, indicating yet another turning point in the affairs of some countries, and we see that conjunction is trine to Pluto, indicating more positive outcomes and moving beyond past inhibiting conditions. There is a Venus/Chiron conjunction in the figure, square to Saturn, introducing upsets and a somber note to the period, even though Venus and Chiron are sextile to Mars. The Saturn/Ixion conjunction we examined in the last letter is still there, this time with Saturn retrograde, and it is trine the Uranus/Eris conjunction. Saturn entered its retrograde period fully on the 6th of this month. It had entered its shadow period on the last day of 2016. It will finish its retrograde period at the end of August at the 22nd degree of Sagittarius. So, from now until September we will be in a period of reassessment with regard to Saturnian issues – ambitions, the elderly, conservatives, the things we have wanted to achieve, the 'old guard', old money, etc. It is not difficult to see where that might be reflected. The Republicans in the US, for instance, have now entered a period of soul-searching, given the recent debacle of the health care bill, and clear divisions have emerged within the party, especially now that Obama is not there to unite them in opposition any longer. The conservative forces in many countries will be re-examining their approach, as they have found it is not so easy as they had supposed to 'turn back the clock' on social issues and progress. They have shown their hand in legislation they have tried to pass, and the public on the whole are not having it.

The setbacks and the subsequent soul-searching conservatives are facing are indicated by the trine by Saturn/Ixion to the Uranus/Eris conjunction. The latter conjunction always favors and indicates social unrest and upsets for conservatives. The last time we saw that conjunction was in 1928, just before the onset of the Great Depression. Herbert Hoover, Republican and conservative, was elected US president that year, later to be remembered as one of the worst US presidents, perhaps unjustifiably so. He had been recognized for his humanitarian efforts in previous years, but his conservative policies while president and during the first years of the Great Depression did little to prevent the collapse of the economy, and as a result he was widely seen to be insensitive to the needs of the general populace, which led to his defeat by a landslide in 1932 to Roosevelt. We can perhaps see the same sort of situation developing now.

The time before that was in 1834, which was in the midst of the growing anti-slavery movement in the US. Andrew Jackson (Democrat) was censured by Congress that year. The Spanish Inquisition was suppressed, slavery was abolished in the British Empire, but British transport of convicts to Australia reached its peak in the 1830s. Of interest is that the colony of South Australia was founded in 1834, and it was the only colony that had no history of convict transport in Australia. 1834 also began a series of severe banking panics and recessions, which lasted to the Great Depression – a full cycle of the Uranus/Eris conjunction. We just saw a reaction against conservative interests by the US populace in its rejection of the Trump/Ryancare healthcare package, and its being pulled by Paul Ryan just prior to the House vote, which was precipitated by

Trump. This was also part and parcel of the solar activation of the 20 Mar 15 eclipse, mentioned previously. At this point it needs to be stated there are conservatives in all political parties.

But here is a point: In the start of this new spiritual cycle, and as we saw with the Aries interval last year, the events we are seeing are stirring the public to action, and in a positive manner. People are uniting in their concerns. The majority of people do not want to see a return to past eras wherein people suffered greatly under financial deregulation, with no work or social benefits, constantly under the fear of war, etc. It would appear that the entire developed world especially, and in particular the US, Britain and Europe, are undergoing a period of *povdig* now (re: quote at the start of this letter). So in that vein, we have the following immediate world issues before us, which will add to the struggles we now have, but which will also serve to either further unite or divide us in common purpose. We can only do no better than to list about half of those I wanted to examine, as exploring all of them will be better left for another time:

- **The problem of North Korea.** This could potentially quickly become one of the world's biggest problems, especially if the US decides to take matters into its own hands.

If so, and if North Korea feels enough threatened, they could conceivably bombard Seoul with its estimated 13,000 artillery pieces presumably aimed at the city, or a nuclear strike.¹⁰ The missiles it has been testing are unreliable and incapable of hitting the US, so any hyperbole about North Korea being a direct threat to the US mainland is unfounded. But those missiles *are* a worry for South Korea and Japan. Japan has indicated that if something is not done, it might militarize itself and even possibly 'go nuclear', which it could easily do.¹¹ The main threat from North Korea to the US is through South Korea and Japan, which are two of our major trading partners – think Samsung, Daewoo, etc, in Korea. In other words, North Korea is a threat to American *interests*, but not to the country itself. But if we look closer, is it really that much of a threat? Yes, it is a bellicose state, its leaders are crazy by our standards and it has developed a few nuclear weapons. But it suffers greatly internally, it has no real civilian infrastructure, its people are undernourished and it relies primarily on large numbers of soldiers for its military strength. When examined closely, it would appear to be a regime that is ripe for collapse. Therein is the problem, though, because the leaders of the regime sense all this and they are quite nervous about it. Desperate people tend to act irrationally.

One of the things that is most striking about Western policy towards countries like North Korea and Iran, for instance, is that they pose no major military threat to us. They are regional powers, but they are held up in the US especially as 'axis of evil'-type states and as being very dangerous. We might rightly question: dangerous to whom? The US appears to be doing in Korea what it has done in Rumania with missile batteries, and that naturally has both China and Russia a little upset, to put it mildly. It would seem to make much more sense to let China, statesmanship and sanctions handle North Korea, to stop provoking both of those countries with huge military exercises with South Korea, make some common-sense proposals to the North Koreans – it has been done in the past¹² – and then for all sides to stick to them. But, the latter point has been the problem all along. The US and North Korea have looked askance at each other since the inception of that state, ever since the Korean War. And Korean unification under US alliance/dominance is not exactly appealing to the Chinese, as it would literally be on their border. So, with Trump saying the US might have to take matters into its own hands with Korea, we can well imagine how that was received in Beijing and Pyongyang. The US is currently sending an aircraft carrier-led strike group toward the Korean peninsula, which will not help to ease the tensions there.

- **The problem of Central Asia.** Central Asia consists of the five countries known as 'the stans', which is the suffix which ends the names of those countries. 'Stan' means 'land of', and these five countries occupy one of the most strategic areas of the world. And, the US currently occupies/controls one of them – Afghanistan.

Aside from 9/11, Americans and many Westerners might rightly ask, “Why are we still in Afghanistan?” Why have the US and Russia fought two disastrous wars there? Hint: it’s about oil and natural resources. And, it’s about trade. The Caspian Sea area holds one of the largest reserves of oil in the world, perhaps the largest, and it is on Russia’s doorstep. It’s also about Islamic tensions and extremism (also on Russia’s doorstep), about heroin production and about control of commercial traffic through central Asia.¹³ I have seen many posts by people who condemn Obama for keeping American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, especially when he said he would end the wars there as he entered his first term in office. But the hard fact is that those wars have put us in a position from which it is difficult to extricate ourselves on the one side, and which are still very profitable from another angle. And, through our covert support of extremist elements in that region, beginning with the Taliban, we have created a situation that has come back to haunt us. To put it another way, our reasons for still being there have changed over the years, and a study of that change would be quite enlightening on a number of fronts.

As was recently stated by someone in the know, we – meaning America – will be in Afghanistan for a long time, at least for the next 50 years, given present trends, and our involvement there is set to increase, not end.¹⁴ Does that raise our level of outrage? It should. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been a boon for the US and British defense industries, and the ‘war on terror’ is used as an excuse for the wars. And, since the US and its allies in reality want to curb Russian and Chinese economic interests, then the US cannot afford to pull out of Afghanistan, as a matter of strategic importance. Afghanistan could quickly become a staging area and base of operations to counter Russian and Chinese “aggression”. That is the sad and infuriating truth for readers who want to see an end to it. Only sustained, increased public anger and activism will end our involvement there. Every American president and leaders of the major Western powers face the same interests that want to keep us in that part of the world, in a perpetual state of war and who want the resources of the region, which is why Obama could do no better than what he did – and to his credit, he did greatly reduce the numbers of US troops in both countries, much to the consternation of conservatives. Trump will likely do no better, given the financial focus of his administration, and may further increase tensions in the area, as he faces the same pressures, and as he is quickly finding out. We already see him starting to toe the line.

- **Brexit and Europe**, now that Article 50 has been triggered.

There is now a whole raft of measures that must be hammered out between London and the EU¹⁵, some of which will be quite problematic. The [trigger chart](#) for article 50, with Neptune on the Midheaven and Pluto on the 7th house cusp (severing of partnerships and litigation, respectively) shows the difficulties that will be encountered. But the people of Britain should be aware of why Brexit has occurred in the first place. Brexit was not about immigrants or about Europe. It is about rage against a system that has consistently failed Britons in the past decades, has seen their wages stagnate and decline, their rights as workers slowly eroded, health care becoming worse and worse, etc., etc. And that really has its roots back in Thatcherism, for one thing, with the introduction of neoliberal economics. If we want to know the true purpose of Brexit, we have only to look at who fomented it – largely conservative politicians in Britain and business interests. The political forces behind Brexit, such as the UKIP Party, favor libertarian economic values (re: no regulations), traditional cultural values (anti-LGBT and rolling back educational policies), favor greatly limiting immigration, are populist and are opposed to multiculturalism. It is very similar to what we saw in the last US elections and the Trump phenomenon and what we are seeing in other European elections. But behind the scenes, it was about releasing British business concerns from Europe.

On the whole, if the politicians who favored Brexit have their way, the average British citizen will probably see a further erosion of the social programs of the past after Brexit is done, with American insurance companies taking control of the NHS, for example.¹⁶ If we think Britons are angry now, wait until Great Britain has severed its contract with Europe and the pro-Brexit politicians have

their way, if they get their way. The British might have their sovereignty back from European regulations, but they will be facing then the same sorts of battles with financial interests that Americans are now facing. And one thing that is not perhaps realized by the larger British public is that Europe is going to be undergoing the process – a process that has begun to become apparent – of the re-evaluation of many of its regulations and returning some sense of sovereignty to its individual states. It will take time, but Britain may well come to regret the day it left the EU, as Europe begins to face its realities in this rapidly changing world and its own internal pressures.

- **A growing fight between the American public and financial interests**, which will be precipitated from health care reform.

This is already serving to fracture the Republican Party and energize the more left-wing base of the Democratic Party. There is a sense of poetic justice for many people in what we see happening in the US at the moment, reminiscent of what we saw with the rise of the Tea Party in 2010 and opposition to Obama. But now the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction. Both of the major parties are showing that they are in the pockets of the bankers and corporations, and Republican and many Democratic members of Congress are showing their true colors with respect to the average working-class citizen, which is that they have no respect for the average American or have lost touch. If there is to be true reform in American health care, then the insurance companies will have to be reined in, as will the pharmaceutical industry, there will have to be interstate, inter-country competition, and if that happens, it will have carry-on effects to all of corporate America. This is the one big fear the corporate powers have with regard to health care reform, and why it has been so strongly resisted in the past. With Republicans trying to throw people off their health insurance, it has sent a clear message to Americans, though, and people have woken up to what is happening. And, it will eventually be the same in Britain, so closely are the two countries connected. Unrestrained, deregulated capitalism and the privations it brings to the average citizen are the catalyst for the growing moves toward the major changes to come in the Western world, not to mention the wider world.

A single-payer system in the US would address the above concerns, and Trump has advocated such a system in the past. However, he does not have the backing for it in Congress, of his financial interests, nor apparently the political will to push such a system through. Nor does he seem interested at all in pushing it. There is also a deeply entrenched propaganda system in place to resist it. ‘Single payer’ has been seen in the past as political suicide by politicians in the US, save for a few, such as Bernie Sanders. But single payer is one of the reasons voted for Trump. If Trump really wanted to be remembered as a great American president, pushing through such a system would clinch it for him. He may get a chance after mid-terms if the more troublesome Republicans are ousted and the Democrats can come to their senses. And what if Bernie Sanders and Trump formed an alliance to do just that sort of thing? Do we think it is far-fetched? Did we think it was insanity to say that Donald Trump was going to be the next president? Time will tell, but we live in times of great opportunity.

- **The US and Syria/US-Middle East relations.**

Some of the following comments will be difficult to read for some readers, but they need to be stated. The recent chemical attack in Syria – if it was a deliberate attack, rather than an aftereffect of an air raid – has once again raised international outrage and finger-pointing toward Assad. We won’t know the truth until after *impartial* investigations have been carried out, but there is good reason to be suspect of knee-jerk conclusions. The [chart of the event](#) shows subterfuge and probably obfuscation of the facts, along with the mass deaths. The Syrian army is doing very well on the ground and is advancing steadily against rebel forces. Why would they need to use chemical weapons now when things are going well for them? And it is still questionable that they have facilities for chemical weapons. An automatic response that plays well politically is, “Because Assad is a monster!” Such is the way he is widely perceived in corporate media. True, there are

many good reasons to want to see the Assad regime gone, but on the other side, the alternative to the Assad regime is even worse, because if he were to be deposed now there would likely be a hardline Islamic state in place in Syria in short order, with sharia law, and all the horrors that would mean for the Syrian people if there were no UN intervention. Is that really what the world or the majority of Syrians want to see? There are no ‘moderate rebels’ in Syria. And now we have sent more ‘advisory’ forces into the Syrian arena, on Obama’s watch and with more to come under Trump, just as we did prior to the Gulf of Tonkin incident in Vietnam, which pulled us into that war.

The US, Israel, Western powers and several regional powers in the Middle East in particular want to see Assad gone, making Syria and the region much more ‘manageable’ in their eyes. Steve Bannon, Trump’s chief strategist, has stated recently that the US will fight a major war in the Middle East, as well as in the South China Sea.¹⁷ He also cites Islam as a major threat to American security. Daesh is not a credible threat to the US. Neither is Islam. Terrorism is a method, not a consolidated enemy. However, it is quite an effective means to keep regions of the world destabilized and the worldwide public fearful. Unfortunately, we can probably expect the rhetoric around Syria and Russia to be scaled up considerably in the US, and calls for further military intervention there. Trump set a dangerous precedent with that missile attack. He is going to be under considerable pressure now for further action, and the stage is set for more events such as that gas attack to try to pull the US into the war. Do we want to see a major war in the Middle East? Would it be necessary? And if so, for whom? Such a war would put us in direct conflict with Russia and Iran, too. It would be great for the defense industry, and for debt – terrible for most everyone else. There would be no real winners.

Watch the Syrian conflict and the corporate press carefully. There are efforts afoot to draw us more fully into that war, if the past is any indication, and stories in the media that are aimed at inciting public outrage and patriotic fervor are usually sure indicators that the gears of war are turning. At the same time, look for what is absent from the reporting: stories that run counter to the narrative. Those stories would be labeled ‘conspiracy theories’. In other words, keep a lookout for stories that are aimed at manufacturing consent for action that would otherwise run counter to public opinion. And that brings us to the military response that the Trump administration has launched against the airbase at al-Shayrat. This situation brings back many reminders about the lead-up to the Iraq War, with the manufactured evidence, the media coverage or lack thereof, etc., but a healthy dose of skepticism about the need for ramped-up military action in Syria should be in order here.

Trump has stated there can be no disputing the fact that the Assad regime used chemical weapons against civilians.¹⁸ Actually, there can be plenty to dispute, and it starts with why Assad would be so careless or mindless of world opinion and reaction to such an action. He might be an a-moral and brutal ruler, or may not be as despotic as people seem to think, but he is not stupid. He has wide support in Syria, and people there know what life under rebels/extremists would mean. On the other hand, one can probably see many reasons why the rebels would want to use such an attack and blame it on the regime, in order to bolster their cause and bring the West and its allies fully into the war. I can also see many reasons why the Trump administration would want to launch a military strike, especially now that the administration is embattled on many fronts. And here is one important point: The chemical incident was on the 4th and two days later we were launching missiles into Syria, with no investigations. I have seen some of the US media reporting on the strike, and quite frankly, it was alarming, with comments such as “beautiful weapons” being launched and “Donald Trump became president today”, describing his action. It reminded me of Iraq and Afghanistan precursors to the wars there.

Just this one action by Trump has cost him some prominent supporters, though.¹⁹ On the other side, he has the full support of the members of Congress whose campaigns are partially funded by the defense industry, unsurprisingly. The action was also unsurprisingly supported by France, Germany, Britain, Israel, the Saudis and Turkey. For now, it would appear that the latest events in

Syria by this administration are likely to be a one-off. If there are no follow-up actions, then that would indicate the missile attack was more or less cosmetic rather than substantive. Is that a cynical view? After all, though, isn't politics a media circus these days, to all appearances? If it was meant to bolster Trump's support among the wider public, it failed. Many of his supporters voted for him because he campaigned as anti-interventionist. And the hawks in Washington are applauding, but wanting much more. If there are follow-up actions, then the situation there is likely to get very ugly, very quickly, as Syria is a Russian ally, and Russia cannot afford to lose face there.

- **The Russian question.**²⁰ Russia is a question even to herself. As she struggles to throw off her past and emerge as a great spiritual and economic center in the world, bridging the East and the West, she goes through struggle after struggle.

The Russian people have suffered grievously under many calamities – wars, natural and man-made disasters, famines, oppressive regimes, etc. And there are many questions there, such as how will Russia respond to the American and coming allied military activity in Syria, for instance? Russia stands to lose quite a bit if allied interests are victorious in Syria. By 'allied interests' I mean the US, European powers, Turkey, Israel and several Arab states in the region. That alliance would seem to be so formidable as to be invincible. We could do quite a round of connect-the-dots with the events of the past couple of years with regard to Syria, which would be quite eye-opening, but at the same time might be labelled as conspiracy. However, we need to keep this brief. These allied forces would be arrayed against Russia, Syria, Iran and possibly China. Russia is facing internal pressures at the moment, too, with anti-corruption protests taking hold now²¹. If we step back and look, Russians face some of the same governmental problems as we face in the West, with oligarchical control and entrenched corruption. If we think there is little corruption in Western governments, we are turning a blind eye.

And in the West, any hope that Trump would ease relations between the US and Russia is off the table now, too, with the Russia investigations in the US, calls for investigating Russia's involvement in the recent gas attack, Russia's cancellation of defense agreements with Washington as a result of the cruise missile attack on Syria, etc. Trump has had to show his hand to Russia now, under internal pressures, and one gets the sense that all bets are off for better relations between the two countries, which will greatly disappoint many of his voters. He also campaigned on an anti-interventionist platform. Trump, like presidents before him, has to bend to political expediencies and pressures from powerful players if he wants to get anything done in Washington. We'll talk to that point a little more in a bit. But as for Russia, she will look after her own interests, and she is ready, whether there is war or not. Russia's only Mediterranean military base is in Syria, and it is more likely than not that she will defend it at considerable cost if Russian lives start being lost in Syria. The world waits to see what will happen now as she considers her options. But the hope of better relations between the US and Russia would appear to be dead, at least for now. We now, sadly for many, have our old nemesis again firmly in her place.

And lastly, some other points worth mentioning, which we will have to leave for now, are as follows, with links to some articles on the same:

- NAFTA and North American relations. The former has greatly hurt Mexico in particular.^{22, 23}
- Relations between Asia and Oceania, which includes Australia and New Zealand. This especially applies to the South China Sea and recent actions by China and the Philippines, for instance. And, if the US and allies go to war in Syria, then Oz and New Zealand will be called upon for support, including troops on the ground there.
- Trade wars, which often lead to hot wars. This is especially the case with China/US relations, but also relates to other countries as well, notably Japan, South Korea and Vietnam.²⁴
- The problem of Israel.²⁵ Israel has been a problem for the US and for the Arab world since its creation. A discussion of that would also be a very thorny issue but we can probably expect tensions there to increase in the immediate future. And Netanyahu is quite problematic.

- European elections and Europe's troubles.²⁶ I would have liked to discuss that here, but we'll have to leave that one, too. Europe needs to avoid being divided and conquered. Issues around Trump and Russia could rally common European interests, too.²⁷
- The fate of the BRICS nations and that economic alliance, especially relative to India, China and Russia.
- South American relations and their current regression. Suffice it to say, the entire world is in the midst of a most important period of transition.

To end this letter on a more positive note, I again stress the opportunities that these times bring, especially with regard to expansion of our horizons and well-being. It is very easy to look at the actions of leaders and administrations and get lost in their personalities. It is also very easy to blame leaders when things do not go as we would like. Finger-pointing is one of our favorite games. But where there are pointed fingers, there is also a refusal to accept responsibility. Here is a point to keep in mind: Every leader is going to fail our expectations at some point. They are human. They have to work within and often against people, institutions and bureaucracies that all seek to serve their own self-interests. The only thing that changes those factors is individual and public effort and activism. It is such activism that has been lacking in the past, and which is beginning to resurface. Aries is about self-initiated change for the better, in a way that no other sign expresses, and that has been the message here with all that we have examined in this installment. We place great hopes and expectations in our leaders, but it is up to the individual to keep up sustained effort in support of those leaders if the sorts of changes we want to see are to become realities. It is not enough to elect a leader and then say, "Well, I've done my part and helped get you elected. Now, go do what we elected you for!" Leaders need continual support and feedback if they are to be effective.

Like so many other world leaders, both Trump and Obama campaigned on change. The same with Brexit in Britain. Will we get what we voted for? It is doubtful unless we hold our leaders to account, stay on top of issues and demand that they truly represent us. To cite a current example, less than 100 days into Trump's presidency, I'm reminded of a quote from a speech by Sarah Palin in 2010, after the Tea Party swept into Congress, when she asked a conservative gathering regarding Obama's policies, "How's that hopey, changey stuff working out?", which was greeted by great applause and laughter by the audience, due to the block of Obama's policies by the Tea Party movement. This is not to denigrate Trump, but to make a point: It matters not who is in power. Active resistance, powerful people and minorities and established institutions do quite a bit to curb the ambitions of leaders who seek to change the established order. Unless we change the basis of the system, there will be little difference from one leader to the next except in approach.

It is useful too, to remember that many people who voted for Trump also voted for Obama, and many of them twice, as well as many people who voted for Bernie Sanders in the primaries. So, for people on either side to point, jeer and call names, are we not all in the same overburdened ferry? The outcomes change only as public opinion enforces change. We saw that in the '60s and '70s with the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War in the US, for instance. In other words, it is our individual efforts, collectively exerted, that create the lasting change that we seek. Trump represents a message that resonates with many Americans, and rightly so on many points. He is right that the system is rigged and needs to be changed, so in a way, to knock Trump is to knock the very changes we say we want to see, even though we may or may not like the man. Many readers may not want to hear it, but we needed Trump at this point in US history. He spoke many things that needed to be brought out in the open, but which other candidates would not voice. He confronted an elitist system that needed to be shocked and brought back into line with the people's will. There is still a long way to go, and now he has to work in that system. Are supporters really surprised things are not going to plan? And why are others happy the system is bucking him and blocking his efforts? We can apply these same ideas to many countries. Whenever one finds Gemini

as the sun sign or rising sign of a world figure, one needs to look for the message that comes through that person. Trump has Gemini sun.

We need our pioneers, thinkers and activists now in a way that has not been seen for a while. The cycles and public mood are ripe for it. Evolution advances by change, by subsequent adaptation by others and then by sustained, collective effort. This sense of change and fresh outlook is what the Aries interval injects into our planetary consciousness every year. We might have to look hard to find it, but it is there. It is not enough to demand something. We must actively engage what we seek, and then only sustained effort usually brings the desired result. This is the gift of Aries – the gift of impassioned engagement in the very change we seek. May our souls bless us with the inspiration that will move mountains and see us through safely to realization of our divine purpose.

Happy Easter!

Malvin

8 Apr 17

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These letters are sent as a service. If you wish to be added to or deleted from the mailing list, let me know. Feel free to pass them on to others, but please do so without charge or alteration.

¹ Spiritual struggle, simply translated. Doing one's best to live a spiritual life in the material realms, which often means struggling against one's own lower nature, and often in the face of the ignorance or resistance of others. The quote is from the book *Supermundane*, from the Agni Yoga series, Helena Roerich. Published by the Agni Yoga Society, available as downloads: http://www.agniyoga.org/ay_en/downloads.php

² <http://www.interfaithmary.net/pages/Loreto.htm>

³ Bailey, Alice A., *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, p. 402

⁴ Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 157

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 441

⁶ Matthew 10:34, The Bible

⁷ The Netherlands are listed as having Aquarius as the personality expression and Cancer as their soul expression. They were cited here as an example of rising nationalism in Europe. From *Destiny of the Nations*, p. 67.

⁸ <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/27/the-dutch-donald-trump-loses>

⁹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/car-bomb-kills-23-baghdad-170320175853000.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.popularmechanics.com/military/a6212/north-korea-and-flattening-seoul/>

¹¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/as-north-korea-fires-missiles-some-in-japan-want-the-ability-to-launch-strikes/2017/03/26/a9568dd8-11f9-11e7-b2bb-417e331877d9_story.html?utm_term=.c285588f3296

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Korea%E2%80%93United_States_relations

¹³ <http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/WRHARTICLES/fivelies.html?q=fivelies.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KilWHg7DwKI> starting at 20:10

¹⁵ <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/03/29/europe/brexit-article-50-to-do-list/>

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=px4bIK-rRZc&t=810s> starting at 13:10.

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/02/steve-bannon-donald-trump-war-south-china-sea-no-doubt>

¹⁸ <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/06/politics/donald-trump-syria-military/>

¹⁹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/donald-trump-airstrikes-syria-assad-infowars-train-fans-polls-numbers-falling-a7671601.html>

²⁰ http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_truth_about_russias_defence_budget_7255

²¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2017/03/26/russias-sunday-protests-the-start-of-new-bolshevik-revolution/#75c735357278>

²² <http://www.globalresearch.ca/no-no-wall-could-hurt-mexico-as-much-as-nafta-has/5574960?print=1>

²³ <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/economics/08/north-american-free-trade-agreement.asp>

²⁴ <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-02-12/asia-s-potential-trade-hot-spots-escaping-trump-s-glare-for-now>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcKVDnAHemo>

²⁶ http://www.ecfr.eu/specials/scorecard/the_future_shape_of_europe

²⁷ <http://www.politico.eu/article/how-donald-trump-will-save-europe-populism/>