

*astrological-cultural-spiritual-political
views & commentary...*

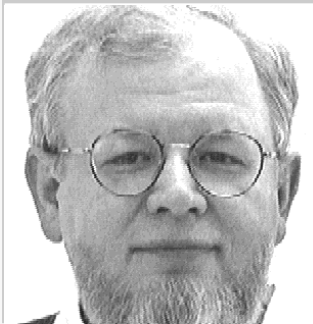
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THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



Thoughts, dates, & reminders about our lives as members of the craziest species on this lovely planet. Like a message in a bottle washing up on the sandy shores of consciousness...

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Dear friends,

Last month I discussed what were then upcoming astrological events. Of those, the first of the Fixed Grand Crosses is already over, and the Mercury retrograde is soon to phase out as Mercury goes direct on December 4th. Mars will soon follow back into direct motion on the 9th. The second Fixed Grand Cross—longer and more powerful in symbolism—has just begun. All those events were analyzed in terms of their formation, timing, and their psychological and spiritual meanings for individuals. This month's newsletter focuses on possible political implications of the current Grand Cross over the next 18 months.

THE GRAND CROSS IN POLITICS

In last month's newsletter, I wrote that Fixed Grand Crosses are about values and goals, and especially about means and ends. Do the ends justify the means? Do the goals we seek allow us to use any means to achieve them? In the final analysis, are we who we say we are, or do our actions reveal that we are not in harmony with our propaganda? These questions have always been relevant to hard-ball politics throughout American history, but the disconnect has reached epic proportions.

Unlike the post-9/11 years of 2002-2003, where truth-telling and dissent were drowned under a tidal wave of institutionalized war fervor and jingoism based on fear, we now move into a period where what was "hidden in plain sight," so to speak, will be revealed as the sleight-of-hand distractions are cut away.

Suddenly, people are tuned into the lies, deceits, and artificial posturing of others, as if our B.S. radar had at last kicked in. Everyone can "feel" everyone else's masks. We may not always know what or who is behind the masks, but the masks themselves are morphing from opaque to transparent. The acid-test of reality is now beginning to reveal which of our individual fantasies and collective dreams have been delusional.

For politicians, who deal in lies on a daily basis, this time is especially embarrassing.. Politics is, of course, a cynical profession. Hell, it's a cesspool. And when the great unwashed beast of "the public"—having been poked, prodded, and altogether abused by many of those in power—finally awakens from its

slumber in anger, as it does periodically for short periods, politicians scramble to cover their butts and mollify the lynch mob. They spin like whirling dervishes.

THE WAR IN IRAQ

The Grand Cross occurring in our heavens over the next two months, with reactivations and continuing repercussions over the year and a half to follow, carries the symbolic implication of a fairly dramatic shift in the political winds. In real events, that wind now whipping through the Beltway was generated largely by the American public's growing negativity toward the absurdist tragedy ongoing in Iraq, through a needless war that our feckless "Commander-in-Chief" declared over and won before it had really begun.

Millions of Americans—including myself—were staunchly opposed to the war in Iraq from well before the start. Allow me to reestablish my anti-war credentials by quoting from my own newsletter of March, 2003, just weeks before the invasion began:

“Anyone who has read these newsletters over the past months knows where I stand on war. I'm against it, flat-out. On the scale of doing good versus doing harm, war inevitably ends up on the extreme end of harm. There is no such thing as a 'good' war. The price is always catastrophic, measured in almost any terms we can conceive.”

Those of us who were opposed to the invasion—whether peace activists, radicals, libertarians, ex-soldiers who understood the real horrors of war, or just plain folks—were excoriated as “traitors” by the administration and the mainstream press back in 2002-2003. (Those same media pundits are now turning to bite the hands of their masters.) The fact that the war has played out as the nightmare we foresaw provides little satisfaction and no solace.

Does the Grand Cross signal an end to the war in Iraq? Sadly, no. Given that our deluded President listens to no one but the quasi-religious voices inside his own head, and since Congress is still filled to the brim with imperialists—both Republicans and Democrats—the savagery will continue.

Voices of dissent, such as Rep. Jack Murtha's, will increase in numbers over the next months (you know we're in trouble when the only truth and sanity among those in power comes from the Pentagon and its closest supporters), but Bush will not be moved.

The problem with the President is that seeing through his mask reveals only another equally illusory mask underneath. Peel off the 5,000 layers of Bush's onion and you get nothing. No reality at all, just confusion and disturbed, adolescent emotion. Poor George W. is one bad dream after another. He's a hollow shell, an empty suit. Nobody's home and the lights aren't even on. Despite that, Bush's evangelical base will continue to prop him up, awash as they are in their own fundamentalist fantasies.

Despite the administration's denial, withdrawal from Iraq will be discussed among the public and in the media. At some point in the next year a gradual drawdown of troops may begin, but the killing and maiming of American soldiers and especially of Iraqi civilians will go on. The imperialists in power are not about to give up their recently-built military bases in Iraq. Massacres on the ground will be replaced by massacres from the air. The insurgency will continue whether we stay or leave.

For my small part, I continue the mantra I've chanted since the invasion: Get out. Get out NOW. Completely. Leave Iraq to the Iraqis.

A GAGGLE OF SCANDALS

So, if we are like dinosaurs trapped in the tar pit of Iraq, where might the Grand Cross make a difference politically? The most obvious manifestations and strongest correspondences of the configuration will likely occur in scandals surrounding lies, deceptions, covert malfeasance, or general incompetence (Saturn in Leo oppose Neptune in Aquarius being prodded by Jupiter and punctured by Mars from the Scorpio-

Taurus axis). As with truffle-rooting pigs, the telltale scent of buried secrets is wafting to the surface in revelations that will adversely affect various individuals in positions of high authority, while others, lower on the ladder's rungs, will be inspired by the opportunity to rise through the ranks.

Heads are already on the chopping block. Congressional leaders Tom Delay and Bill Frist are now hogtied by ongoing investigations into alleged misdeeds and improprieties (which couldn't happen to a nicer couple!). While these bad boys continue to protest their innocence, other public humiliations are already underway. The Abramhoff lobbying investigation that snagged Delay is just the tip of a huge iceberg of incredible corruption now approaching meltdown. The Grand Cross may provide all the heat necessary. Case in point: Congressman "Duke" Cunningham's recent tearful confession about taking millions in bribes from sleazy defense contractors. For awhile, at least, we may see some progress toward cleaning out the fetid troughs of the D.C. pigsty, where all the little piglets gather to feed and snort on their way to becoming big, rich hogs.

Within the Bush administration, sacrificial lambs will take the heat for the President, whose chart is already under great pressure, but who will be protected at all costs. Harriet Miers has already gone down, as has Scooter Libby.

The charts of Vice-President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice are all pulled into the vortex of the Grand Cross, so they are vulnerable to some much-deserved comeuppance. Of that unholy trio, Cheney (who must surely be the anti-Christ) is most at risk, since the Grand Cross smacks the Sun in his chart. Rice may end up with some egg on her face (eggs and Rice?), but Rumsfeld is most likely to sail through unscathed, even though he is now roundly hated in the Pentagon. Curiously, Karl Rove's chart is only minimally affected by the Grand Cross, but his goose may already be cooked (and it's about time).

Despite the aggressive edge of this period, however, don't expect any catastrophic upheavals in government. The most commonly used chart for the United States (called the "Sibly" chart for July 4th, 1776) is mostly unaffected by the Grand Cross. The USA chart is coming out of a very difficult period over the last two years, where confusion and deception reigned with Neptune-Mars transits while Saturn's influence on the country as a whole weighed heavily to hold bogus authority in place. As those influences ebb away and are replaced by significant Uranian activity, shocks of awakening and unexpected changes of direction are quite likely. Note how the mainstream media is already commenting on the sudden shift in the country's mood as the status quo is challenged. That feeling will increase throughout 2006.

In general, though, those in the disaffected public who call for impeachment of President Bush are just whistling Dixie. Not a snowball's chance. Not soon, anyway. Conversely, choir members who pray for a miraculous resurrection of BushCo's plummeting popularity in public approval polls will be sorely disappointed, too. Bush won't go down for the count, but he's likely to take quite a beating and remain one very unhappy camper.

For people who are disappointed that only one indictment has been handed down so far by Special Prosecutor Fitzgerald in the Wilson-Plame investigation, I would advise a wait-and-see attitude. Just sit back and watch what unfolds over the next months. This Grand Cross has legs, and Fitzgerald is a methodical, thorough, and incorruptible bloodhound. The wheels of justice may turn slowly, but they are in motion and will grind inexorably over time.

During September-October of 2005, small cracks appeared in the political stonewalling of lies and secrecy, culminating in the indictment against Libby. By early next year, those cracks could steadily widen and the dam might be breached. Cheney better stay in his bunker, because December and January could see some serious flooding in BushCo Valley. As momentum builds, aggressive efforts to substantiate further allegations and prosecute crimes will continue through early May, 2006.

By that point, we should know where more bodies are buried (as if we couldn't guess already). Public outrage—meaning disillusionment for some and elation for others—will reach a peak next spring. From May until the midterm Congressional elections in November 2006, we should see a desperate attempt on the part of Republicans to shore up their sinking ship through damage control and spin, while formerly

spineless Democrats suddenly gain new-found courage to present an “alternative.” An aroused public, however, will be no more likely to embrace Democrats than Republicans, since corruption is pandemic on both sides of the aisle.

Whatever the results of the midterm Congressional elections in November of 2006, during the ten months that follow—all the way through the summer of 2007—we will probably see an effort on the part of politicians and spin doctors in both parties to pacify a disturbed and restless public by the construction of a new edifice of comforting propaganda. One Tower of Babel falls; another arises in its place. So, dear friends, think twice before drinking the new, improved poisoned Kool-Aid. As Pete Townshend wrote in The Who’s song *Won’t Get Fooled Again*, “Meet the new boss. Same as the old boss.” Locally-based grass-roots activism is the best medicine to heal at least some of what ails this country. Power brokers inside the Beltway will ignore the will of the people until sufficiently pressured to pay attention by increasing local reform or outright civil disobedience.

All in all, we have moved into a period of revelation that should be fascinating to observe. The past five years have represented a singularly low ebb in the history of the American republic. As a sad crescendo to the cumulative follies of the past three decades—which included corporate takeover of government and culture, looting of the commons by the wealthy and influential, plus nearly unrestrained empire-building and rampant militarism—we have witnessed the steady erosion and dismantling of many of the creative compromises that made this country a decent place.

The genius of America was never in ideological purity, but in a crazy-quilt amalgam of relatively untrammelled capitalism and relatively progressive socialism. Freedom to pursue commerce and dreams of wealth were counterweighted by ideals of equal social justice and a modestly level playing field. Since Reagan, however, too many Americans were seduced by right-wing propaganda and fell into hypnotic sleep while the delicate balance between wealth and justice was overturned by lobbyists, lawyers, and a Congress increasingly owned by powerful special interests. Rule by the privileged few now mocks equality for the many.

Whether or not we can awaken as a people, restore a healthier balance, and save the nation from the worst impulses of our all-too-human nature remain unanswered questions with dicey Las Vegas odds, but we will know considerably more about those possibilities by August, 2007.



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