

Occupy, the protest movement you have in Wonderland

by red queen Tuesday, Feb 14 2012, 5:53am

international / social/political / commentary

Let's begin at the beginning, Occupy as a 'movement' goes nowhere; from day one to today it has effected NO CHANGE whatsoever. Videos of PASSIVE idiots allowing themselves to be sprayed with mace by sadistic police is hardly a victorious 'look' is it, vacuum heads? What sort of (defeatist) MESSAGE do mindless Occupy morons think they're sending to the public? To date Occupy has achieved NOTHING, it was and remains a dead-in-the-water STATIC 'movement,' please excuse the American contradictions but I am describing an American protest movement! We should ask why Occupy has achieved nothing POSITIVE to date? The obvious answer would be because it has no agenda, direction or ARTICULATED OBJECTIVES.

The tragedy of this static movement is that once respected activists like Chris Hedges have been completely mind-numbed by this OTPOR/CANVAS orchestrated protest-in-a-box, phenomenon. Hedges simply can't let go of the chimera; he has recently taken to accusing anarchists, who at least burn down banks in Europe -- which has universal appeal -- of destroying the static 'movement!' Not so, Chris, the non-event movement is destroying itself by having no clear objectives or direction, what did you expect?

A resistance or protest group that has no agenda, objectives or FOCUS is doomed from the outset; FAILURE is INEVITABLE and pointing fingers or blaming external forces for that INEVITABLE FAILURE is not only childish but betrays a certain psychopathology.

Hedges' latest apologist piece, following his irrational written condemnation of the anarchist 'black bloc,' hints of an author/activist approaching breakdown -- its trajectory is somewhere 'out there' in galactic space. To describe his previous piece as ill-advised is to identify his latest piece as self-annihilating; it is with deep sadness that we all witness the slow unravelling of a once competent and acute analytical mind.

The title of Mr Hedges' latest piece is extremely revealing, "*Occupy Draws Strength From the Powerless*," readers should note that Hedges underwent a seminary type education and his latest piece reeks of Christian undertones and inclinations to martyrdom.

Occupy had no need to draw powerlessness from anyone it never had any "strength" to begin with, and drawing whatever from the "powerless" fits the equation perfectly -- **powerless plus powerless equals powerless!** It's a ZERO EQUATION from start to finish, a perfect characterization of the static Occupy 'movement!'

Hedges' tragic article follows. We sincerely hope that Mr Hedges returns to his senses soon, as lamenting a corpse is not conducive to any positive outcomes. Perhaps Mr Hedges should champion a real cause like nationalizing the Banks or running for office with that policy, it is viable, immensely practical -- as it would separate the corrupt, criminal ruling cabals from their life-blood, their corruption money -- and it is also highly saleable, a policy the public could easily embrace, just a thought, Chris! You should also remember that your saviour, Jesus Christ, armed with a whip, **physically ejected Bankers/money-changers from the Temple**, overturning their tables in the

process, a truly revolutionary act in the circumstances -- he certainly would not have been suitable for the non-focused, directionless Occupy 'movement;' he was far too dynamic and focused for Occupy morons and martyr-complex defeatists!

There is a recipe for breaking popular movements. I watched it play out over five years in the war in El Salvador. I now see these familiar patterns in the assault against the Occupy movement. It goes like this. Physically eradicate the insurgents' logistical base of operations to disrupt communication and organization. Dry up financial and material support. Create rival organizations—the group Stand for Oakland seems to be one of these attempts—to discredit and purge the rebel leadership. Infiltrate the movement to foster internal divisions and rivalries, a tactic carried out consciously, or perhaps unconsciously, by an anonymous West Coast group known as OLAASM—Occupy Los Angeles Anti Social Media. Provoke the movement—or front groups acting in the name of the movement—to carry out actions such as vandalism and physical confrontations with the police that alienate the wider populace from the insurgency. Invent atrocities and repugnant acts supposedly carried out by the movement and plant these stories in the media. Finally, offer up a political alternative. In the war in El Salvador it was Jose Napoleon Duarte. For the Occupy movement it is someone like Van Jones. And use this “reformist” to co-opt the language of the movement and promise to promote the movement's core aims through the electoral process.

Counterinsurgency campaigns, although they involve arms and weapons, are primarily about, in the old cliché, hearts and minds. And the tactics employed by our intelligence operatives abroad are not dissimilar to those employed by our intelligence operatives at home. These operatives are, in fact, often the same people. The state has expended external resources to break the movement. It is reasonable to assume it has expended internal resources to break the movement.

The security and surveillance state has a vast arsenal and array of tools at its disposal. It operates in secret. It dissembles and lies. It hides behind phony organizations and individuals who use false histories and false names. It has millions of dollars to spend, the capacity to deny not only its activities but also its existence. Its physical assets honeycomb the country. It can wiretap, eavesdrop and monitor every form of communication. It can hire informants, send in clandestine agents, recruit members within the movement by offering legal immunity, churn out a steady stream of divisive propaganda and amass huge databases and clandestine operations centers. And it is authorized to use deadly force.

How do we fight back? We do not have the tools or the wealth of the state. We cannot beat it at its own game. We cannot ferret out infiltrators. The legal system is almost always on the state's side. If we attempt to replicate the elaborate security apparatus of our oppressors, even on a small scale, we will unleash widespread paranoia and fracture the movement. If we retreat into anonymity, hiding behind masks, then we provide an opening for agents provocateurs who deny their identities while disrupting the movement. If we fight pitched battles in the streets we give authorities an excuse to fire their weapons.

All we have, as Vaclav Havel writes, is our own powerlessness. And that powerlessness is our strength. The survival of the movement depends on embracing this powerlessness. It depends on two of our most important assets—utter and complete transparency and a

rigid adherence to nonviolence, including respect for private property. This permits us, as Havel puts it in his 1978 essay "The Power of the Powerless," to live in truth. And by living in truth we expose a corrupt corporate state that perpetrates lies and lives in deceit.

Havel, who would later become the first president of the Czech Republic, in the essay writes a reflection on the mind of a greengrocer who, as instructed, puts up a poster "among the onions and carrots" that reads: "Workers of the World Unite!" The poster is displayed partly out of habit, partly because everyone else does it, and partly out of fear of the consequences for not following the rules. The greengrocer would not, Havel writes, display a poster saying: "I am afraid and therefore unquestioningly obedient." And here is the difference between the terror of a Josef Stalin or an Adolf Hitler and the collective charade between the rulers and the ruled that by the 1970s had gripped Czechoslovakia.

"Imagine," Havel writes, "that one day something in our greengrocer snaps and he stops putting up the slogans merely to ingratiate himself. He stops voting in elections he knows are a farce. He begins to say what he really thinks at political meetings. And he even finds the strength in himself to express solidarity with those whom his conscience commands him to support. In this revolt the greengrocer steps out of living within the lie. He rejects the ritual and breaks the rules of the game. He discovers once more his suppressed identity and dignity. He gives his freedom a concrete significance. His revolt is an attempt to live within the truth."

This attempt to "live within the truth" brings with it ostracism and retribution. Punishment is imposed in bankrupt systems because of the necessity for compliance, not out of any real conviction. And the real crime committed is not the crime of speaking out or defying the rules, but the crime of exposing the charade.

"By breaking the rules of the game, he has disrupted the game as such, he has exposed it as a mere game," Havel says of his greengrocer. "He has shattered the world of appearances, the fundamental pillar of the system. He has upset the power structure by tearing apart what holds it together. He has demonstrated that living a lie is living a lie. He has broken through the exalted façade of the system and exposed the real, base foundations of power. He has said that the emperor is naked. And because the emperor is in fact naked, something extremely dangerous has happened: by his action, the greengrocer has addressed the world. He has enabled everyone to peer behind the curtain. He has shown everyone that it is possible to live within the truth. Living within the lie can constitute the system only if it is universal. The principle must embrace and permeate everything. There are no terms whatsoever on which it can coexist with living within the truth, and therefore everyone who steps out of line denies it in principle and threatens it in its entirety."

Those who do not carve out spaces separate from the state and its systems of power, those who cannot find room to become autonomous, or who do not "live in truth," inevitably become compromised. In Havel's words, they "are the system." The Occupy movement, by naming corporate power and refusing to compromise with it, by forming alternative systems of community and society, embodies Havel's call to "live in truth." It does not appeal to the systems of control, and for this reason it is a genuine threat to the corporate state.

Movements that call on followers to “live in truth” do not always succeed. They failed in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, triggering armed insurgencies and blood-drenched civil wars. They have failed so far in Iran, the Israeli-occupied territories and Syria. China has a movement modeled after Havel’s Charter 77 called Charter 08. But the Chinese opposition to the state has been effectively suppressed, even though its principal author, Liu Xiaobo, currently serving an 11-year prison term for “incitement of subversion of state power,” was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. Power elites who stubbornly refuse to heed popular will and resort to harsher and harsher forms of state control can easily provoke counterviolence. The first Palestinian uprising, which lasted from 1987 to 1992, saw crowds of demonstrators throw rocks at Israeli soldiers, but it was largely a nonviolent movement. The second uprising, or intifada, which erupted in 2000 and endured for five years, with armed attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians, was not. History is dotted with brutal fratricides spawned by calcified and repressive elites who ignored peaceful protest. And even when nonviolent movements do succeed, it is impossible to predict when they will spawn an uprising or how long the process will take. As Timothy Garton Ash noted about Eastern Europe’s revolutions of the late 20th century, in Poland the revolt took 10 years, in East Germany 10 weeks, in Czechoslovakia 10 days.

Occupy’s most powerful asset is that it articulates this truth. And this truth is understood by the mainstream, the 99 percent. If the movement is severed from the mainstream, which I expect is the primary goal of the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI, it will be crippled and easily contained. Other, more militant groups may rise and even flourish, but if the Occupy movement is to retain the majority it will have to fight within self-imposed limitations of nonviolence.

I do not know if it will succeed. If it does not, then I fear we will see the classical forms of violent protest that are used by an enraged and frustrated populace; for me such a turn to violence, while understandable, is always tragic. Violence is a poison, even when it is ingested in a supposedly just cause. It contaminates all who use it. I watched this poison work on repressors and the repressed from Latin America to the Middle East to the Balkans. I am not a pacifist. I know there are limits. But I desperately want to avoid going there.

“We would not have a movement if violence or property damage were used from the outset,” Kevin Zeese, one of the first activists to call for an Occupy movement, told me. “People are not drawn to violent movement. Such tactics will shrink rather than expand our base of support. Property damage justifies police violence to many Americans. There is a wide range of diversity of tactics within a nonviolent strategy. Disciplined nonviolence is often more difficult because anger and emotion lead people to want to strike back at the police when they are violent, but disciplined nonviolence is the tactic that is most effective against the violence of the state.”

The organizer Lisa Fithian is an author of one of the most concise arguments for nonviolence, “Open Letter to the Occupy Movement: Why We Need Agreements.” The essay points out that without agreements that enshrine nonviolence, “the young [are privileged] over the old, the loud voices over the soft, the fast over the slow, the able-bodied over those with disabilities, the citizen over the immigrant, white folks over people of color, those who can do damage and flee the scene over those who are left to face the consequences.”

'Diversity of tactics' becomes an easy way to avoid wrestling with questions of strategy and accountability," Fithian and two other authors write of the slogan used by the Black Bloc anarchists. "It lets us off the hook from doing the hard work of debating our positions and coming to agreements about how we want to act together. It becomes a code for 'anything goes,' and makes it impossible for our movements to hold anyone accountable for their actions."

"The Occupy movement includes people from a broad diversity of backgrounds, life experiences and political philosophies," the article goes on. "Some of us want to reform the system and some of us want to tear it down and replace it with something better. Our one great point of agreement is our call for transparency and accountability. We stand against the corrupt institutions that broker power behind closed doors. We call to account the financial manipulators that have bilked billions out of the poor and the middle classes.

"Just as we call for accountability and transparency, we ourselves must be accountable and transparent," the authors write. "Some tactics are incompatible with those goals, even if in other situations they might be useful, honorable or appropriate. We can't be transparent behind masks. We can't be accountable for actions we run away from. We can't maintain the security culture necessary for planning and carrying out attacks on property and also maintain the openness that can continue to invite in a true diversity of new people. We can't make alliances with groups from impacted communities, such as immigrants, if we can't make agreements about what tactics we will employ in any given action."

We must assume we are targets. And we must fight back by relying on our strength, which in the great paradox of resistance movements is embodied in our weakness. This does not mean we will avoid being repressed or persecuted. It will not keep us safe from slander, lies or jail. But it does offer the capacity to create internal divisions in the apparatus of the oppressors rather than permit the oppressors to create internal divisions within the movement. Divided loyalties create paralysis. And it is our job to paralyze them, not allow them to paralyze us.

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See also:

<http://landdestroyer.blogspot.com.au/2011/02/cia-coup-college.html>

http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/occupy_draws_strength_from_the_powerless_20120213/

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-3003.html>