



Strategic Outlook

Written in May 2012, the spring after the
Occupy Movement began, by Stone Riley.

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Main website: www.StoneRiley.com

The strategic victory of our first year's campaign has been so quickly manifest and so complete as to rank among the great coups of history. It is as if the whole terrain of a vast country changed suddenly and Justice took the high ground.

Our enemies did not dare to murder us, despite their seeming total powers of coercion. Seeing that fact, our friends rose from despair and took heart in great numbers. So now our enemies are still mighty but frightened. In short, we proved our courage and our wisdom, thereby creating hope that virtue can win, and all of it done in a few crowded weeks at the end of one summer.

That being true, I think that the suppression of our camps at the close of that campaign was no defeat at all despite appearances. From the evidence of this spring's massive rising I think we have to say, although we may not understand it yet, that the routing of our camps was a serious blunder by the Empire forces.

Of course many of us do recall the loss of our camps last year with sorrow. They were beautiful utopias. Certainly they were not perfect, certainly not the lonely perfect island that philosopher Thomas More imagined in his book "Utopia" five hundred years ago.

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Instead they were generous, open, striving, full of constant negotiation, the kind of place human beings in any age love to build in the ruins of great disasters. Our camps last year were the kind of place people often build by their brave generosity and their striving creativity among the ruins left by hurricanes and earthquakes. And that experience of enduring and recurring practical divinity, in actual fact, is the inspiration and soul of all democracies.

It's true our situation was a continuous disaster, a nation endlessly plundered by relentless merciless enslaving thieves. And even in that most unfriendly circumstance we proved again that a powerful capacity for love and hope and voluntary work is something born in universal human nature. That demonstrated fact gave hope that common human virtue is strong enough for this emergency.

But the camps were under constant threat of violence – often truly under siege – so by autumn's end they were inevitably feeling internal strain. Then the final attacks saved us from struggling through debates about retreat to winter quarters. Then, forced by necessity, we found winter quarters easily enough. So at least in that way, the routing was a blunder by the Empire's supporters.

Turning to another matter, I see an interesting opinion piece in this morning's news. An employee of one of the big Imperial parties offers friendly advice that we had better join up with them. In that writer's words, we ought to “occupy a wing of the Democratic Party”.

Occupy, that writer says, had better jump on board the Democratic Party Express before we fade into obscurity. If not, we'll quickly vanish out of sight behind their rushing locomotive as it hurtles into the future. And of course this morning's friendly writer helpfully suggests that we must purge Occupy to buy a ticket on their train; we must toss out our violent trouble making anarchists.

Being one of Occupy's countless nonviolent anarchists myself, I'm not sure what to say about that piece of bland stupidity. But it does lead into a genuine large strategic issue which is now before us so I will offer a reply.

Alright, let's consider the proposal that we join the Democratic Party. This proposal sounds as if their President's endless war beyond law and mercy – and their party's acceptance of all-controlling ever growing bribes – and their constant betrayals of promises to ordinary people – and etc. etc. etc. – that somehow these

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failures do not put the Democratic Party far beyond consideration as our home. The fact is, they are far too dirty.

But then there is the larger question of what attitude we ought to take toward our nation's whole ruling structure. This question is profound. Should we endorse candidates in elections? Or the opposite; concentrate on building better and better proto-utopian structures? Or something else? What is our best next step toward real democracy?

And that question is complicated by the fact that our country's ruling structure is collapsing. The American Empire is visibly crumbling. Our best strategy might depend on how the process of collapse happens in the next few years.

Looking forward optimistically, in maybe ten years I can see the country awaking from our dream of world domination. I can see the bribery machine switched off by national bankruptcy. I can see canceled debts allowing people better lives beyond the money paradigm. I see prison gates clang open. I see global warming becoming the intense focus of national will. I see new improved interpretations of the U.S. Constitution on the table.

But that is certainly optimistic.

I can look forward pessimistically instead. There America is bankrupt and dreams of empire vanished, but prisons are stuffed with far more prisoners than even now and rich elites and hired thugs hold keys to all our cells. Having drunk America dry by then, elites are seeking streams of wealth from foreign sources, negotiating their new terms of employment as native rulers of a client state. Evils flow in floods and we find ourselves in a rising tide of conflict. Hope for worldwide progress slips away and climate change intensifies with growing speed.

And we can imagine many other scenarios, each one with different opportunities and difficulties.

So what relationship should Occupy have (or try to have) with the current rulers of the United States? Should we support candidates in elections, or declare independence instead, building our proto-utopian parallel structures? Or something else? It might seem like we need to guess where the big old tree is falling before we jump into a strategy.

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But I don't think we need to wait one minute. The opposite; we must press our advantage. Each of us, wherever we are now, should look around to find the friends and allies who are also here, learn from them, consult everyone in democratic process, face the mountain of difficulties that stands before us, dig our fingertips into whatever surface yields a hold, and start to climb. We must advance.

Keep your eye on the central goal. Our nation is being attacked by merciless enslaving thieves. They have seized the bodies of the nation that write laws, the bodies which define and distribute money, those which command police and military, and those dispensing mesmerizing propaganda.

But our enemies have decisively lost “consent of the governed”. Few people now believe them. Most people now see that laws made by thieves are crimes as well. Most people see the sick, hungry, dirty, poor as crime victims like themselves, no longer seeing fellow citizens as nasty and deserving to be cast out. That is a big step toward real democracy.

Loss of popular consent is a major weakness for our enemies. Surely our correct strategic goal is to exploit that weakness by bringing truth, justice, generosity, ordinary human respect – and joy – to every corner of America that we can reach. This task obviously demands great expense of physical, mental and spiritual energy.

But I am happy to report good news. What I am suggesting – very hard creative work aligned with our best ideals in unity with others – is exactly what I see our people doing, everywhere this spring.

So far, so good.

However, this pamphlet has very limited space and there is still a fundamental strategic item which I suggested several times above but which must be emphasized repeatedly: Nonviolence.

We are pulled to a nonviolent struggle by three chains of logic that are irrefutable.

One: By definition, real democracy is nonviolent acceptance of your fellow citizens as your equals and acceptance of everyone as fellow citizens.

Two: Our enemies have stronger weapons of violence than we can possibly muster.

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Three: Historical developments in warfare at this time make nonviolent force (“truth force” in Gandhi's term) unusually strong as a weapon and violence unusually weak.

Pick whichever line of reasoning best suits your purposes or inclination – I stress different ones with different people at different times – but those three principles are all definitely true and crucial aspects of our situation, in my opinion.

But I think a fourth logic also impels Occupy irresistibly to nonviolence: A great many people in the country today are talking enthusiastically about attacking the government with guns and bombs. They give every indication of grave sincerity and I see no reason to doubt them.

These forces are “more royalist than the king” as the old saying goes, even more anti-democratic and pro-violence than the President. They have been taught to hate him for non-disprovable absurdities: his demonic opposition to their cruel god, his illegal alien ethnicity, etc. Some of these groups especially recruit policemen and soldiers. Some groups are well connected to elites.

If this incipient fascist putsch is launched, the pressing cause of public welfare – the urgent need for victory without a civil war – will thrust Occupy and our allies toward alliance with the government. That paradoxical situation will be very difficult. I think we will be competent for such a role of high politics – and it will be available to us – only if we have by then perfected our skills and ideals in the nonviolent struggle for democracy.

In short, the people desperately need a voice of peace and a counterweight to cruelty in the struggle for control here in the heartland of the crumbling Empire. Occupy should try to do that duty.

{ End Of Essay }