Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today (review)

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derland hodge-podge in which whatever the army does is justified and legal, while the citizen's main right seems to be an obligation, to be obedient within the narrow limits set by the army. Dissent is virtually outlawed. The army assumes that all dissent is manipulated by "subversives" and is meant to destabilize the system; thus all dissent is "terrorist," making dissenters fair game for elimination.

The book's conclusion brings the story up to 1996. Eight years later we know that the December 1996 peace accords have been little implemented when they clashed with established interests, a case in point being the "Agreement on the Strengthening of Civil Power and the Role of the Army in a Democratic Society," that specifically mandated a substantial reduction in the army's size and its withdrawal from many non-military aspects of Guatemalan life which it controlled. But, short of moving a few generals around, not much has happened. On the contrary the United States has been busily training and equipping the military to extend its operations into a new area, the drug trade (with which, ironically, some army officers have been identified). Moreover, the government which left office in January 2004 actually increased by almost 50 percent the military's share of government revenues over the amount specified in the peace accords, while corruption, ineffective government and general poverty were rampant. A recent, hopeful sign that things might finally be changing is that Guatemala's new leader, President Oscar Berger, announced in April 2004 that he wants to cut the size of the army by 35 percent, its budget by 33 percent and the number of military bases by half. Achievement of even part of this goal would be a major accomplishment.

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Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today. By John Holloway. London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Books, 2002. Pp. viii, 237. Notes. Bibliography. Indices. $24.95 paper.

John Holloway's latest contribution to the understanding of revolutionary movements is a bit of a surprise. His recent work has focused on the Zapatistas, doing much to move the discussion of their struggle from hagiography to understanding the intricacies and implications of the movement. It came as a bit of a shock, then, that the Zapatistas barely appear in his new book; they are mentioned in only a handful of places. So perhaps it is best to begin by saying what this book is *not*. It is not about the Zapatistas, though certainly informed by Holloway's insights into their critique of processes of revolution. It is not a book that concretely touches on the welter of resistance movements in operation in the world today, save as passing examples. And—perhaps to the chagrin of the activists to whom this book might be primarily oriented—it is certainly *not* a book that matches its title.

Instead, Holloway presents a book about how *not* to take power in the process of trying to change the world. It is primarily a theoretical work that yields a method-

ological shift in how intellectuals understand the processes of and need for revolution. Reinvigorating the critical negative tradition in post-Marxist theories of revolution, Holloway reopens crucial debates within Marxism as to the nature and sustainability of capitalism and the theory of revolutionary agency. Starting with the scream of anguish that emanates from all oppressed peoples in a variety of ways, Holloway works to show how that anguish is the result of processes of fetishization within capitalist social orders—including, most poignantly, the Marxist fetishization of fetishization. Holloway has a keen eye for the ways social-scientific analyses of the status quo and the revolutionary struggles against it serve to obscure the primary human qualities that should characterize a society, namely the rejoining of human doing and their control over what is done. So much of what capitalism has done is the result of the separation of doing from doer, so that even revolutionary social scientists have lost sight of that key way in which oppressive societies are maintained. It is only in reclaiming human control over human praxis that Holloway sees the possibility of a just social order.

It is in the discussion of the forms of power exerting and resisting control over human doing—what he calls the "power-over" form in capitalism and the "power-to" that inheres to humans even despite capitalist exploitation—that Holloway provides the kind of tools his activist readers might yearn for and the insights scholars relish. By dialectically analyzing these forms of power within the social order, Holloway admirably highlights the ways in which everyday actions provide capitalism with its materiel and revolutionaries with the way they can change the world. In this analysis, Holloway provides quite possibly one of the most interesting (and probably controversial) elements of this work: that revolutionaries should not bother with trying to take power, because when they have, it has only yielded the repetition of forms of domination.

In the end, we are left with an appropriate sense of incompleteness. Holloway finishes the book with the same scream it began with, making it seem like a theoretical detour around the two key problems he so strongly analyzes. One is thereby left with two nagging senses while reading this work. The first is that of the "of course," following Sartre's claim in *Hope Now* (1993/1980) that "society had to stop being the shitty mess that it was." The second, more fundamental problem to my mind is the inability of Holloway's cogent analysis of power, fetishization, and human potential through praxis to provide any criteria for efficacy to those who would take on his challenge. Without providing any way to know if we can change or have changed the world without power (and his reasons for doing it speak to the best of historical materialism), his social-scientific readers will be quite grateful for his contribution, while his other audience will probably and sadly be disappointed. This book could have been a needed bridge between scholars and activists, and I hope that Holloway's future work will build that bridge. He is most clearly qualified.

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