

## CHAPTER 1

# From the Streets to the State

## A Critical Introduction

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### I

The communist playwright Bertolt Brecht (1977) once wrote, “The individual can be annihilated / But the Party cannot be annihilated” (29). And yet, the party has been annihilated. It seems that only the individual remains. A century after the Russian Revolution, communist parties have become insignificant political forces, or, as in China, are establishing capitalism. Meanwhile, social democratic parties everywhere have abandoned any attempt to achieve socialism through gradual reforms. At the most, they are resigned to preserving a more humane capitalism, the permanence of which they do not doubt. Given the declines of communism and social democracy, what constitutes the radical left today? Among other things, it includes anyone who believes that capitalism is fundamentally unjust because it has inherent social inequalities that are the result of imposed historical circumstances, not permanent natural hierarchies. For that reason, radical leftists argue that capitalism can and should be replaced by a much more egalitarian social order. In recent decades, for certain sections of this radical left, the experiences of state socialism have not discredited the need for an alternative to capitalism, only the idea that it can be achieved through taking state power. For them, the annihilation of the party is not an obstacle, but an opportunity. The spirit of this diverse political tendency is best captured by the radical left theorist John Holloway (2002) and his slogan, “Change the world without taking power.”

In general, this anti-power politics believes that fundamental transformations of capitalist society cannot occur through political parties, electoral politics, and winning government office. Instead, radical change requires creating and expanding institutions that are autonomous from the states that they will eventually replace. These parallel institutions are variously described as *dual power*, *counter-power*,

*diarchy*, or *autonomism*. They can include popular assemblies, cooperatives, and councils in workplaces, schools, barracks, neighborhoods, social centers, and free zones. This strategy has persuaded significant parts of the radical left, including within the New Left and the new social movements since the late 1960s; the anti-globalization, alter-globalization, and global justice movements from the 1990s; the World Social Forums since the early 2000s; and the Occupy and Squares movements from the late 2000s and early 2010s.

Indeed, we can situate Holloway in these shifts. In the 1970s and 1980s, he was one of the more articulate strategists of taking state power.<sup>1</sup> In the 1990s, however, Holloway became inspired by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, better known as the Zapatistas, who demanded from the Mexican government autonomous control of the land and resources in Chiapas, the country's southernmost state. Seizing territory and establishing autonomous municipalities, the Zapatistas used the surrounding jungles and mountains, and, eventually, protracted negotiations with the central government, as cover for an anti-power strategy that rejects political parties and electoral politics, which they believe perpetuate a state they regard as completely illegitimate. Holloway (2002) attempted to turn the Zapatista experience into a global strategy with his book, *Change the World without Taking Power*. Many of the criticisms of twentieth-century state socialism are, of course, warranted.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, anti-power politics has existed long enough to show persisting problems that throw into question its ability to change the world.

First, we on the radical left have become increasingly fragmented. Many radical leftists are quite wary of, or outright reject, the socialist political parties and programs that attempt to integrate diverse egalitarian struggles into a unified political force. This is accused, often justly, of class reductionism, of reducing manifold oppressions to class exploitation. Other forms of oppression are as integral to capitalist society, including patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, racialization, ethnic persecution, colonialism, and imperialism. Indeed, these oppressions are mutually reinforcing or co-constituting, because each is transformed through its complex and shifting relations in the broader social whole such that no form of oppression is likely to be overcome unless all of them are (Ferguson 2016; Bannerji 1995). Nevertheless, in the name of pluralism, the radical left has given way to a fractious politics that precludes substantive compromise and integrated activities. The proposed alternatives to socialist parties are coalitions or networks that are more than a movement but less than a party. But our coalitions tend to prioritize an internal focus motivated by suspicion of potential allies. This sacrifices much of our externally focused action to a new sectarianism (Reed 2000). Influenced by intellectual movements like postmodernism, post-Marxism, and identity politics, we recast our fragmentation by describing ourselves as *the multitude* (Hardt and Negri 2000). This turns our thorough defeats into false victories. The anti-power milieu has, in its own ways, uncritically absorbed the rampant individualism of the prevailing neoliberal capitalism just as surely as have many of the social democratic and communist parties.

Second, we lack cohesive and long-term strategies. Many radical leftists now reject the idea of attempting to forge a collective will among different struggles by developing a single encompassing strategy based in universal principles. This is criticized as a rigid party line, and, in many cases, rightly so. Instead, they promote coalitions based in deliberately vague notions of anti-capitalism and the *diversity of tactics* in which each participating group is given enough autonomy to choose their own political activities. This fruitfully challenges narrow conceptions of “the political,” especially given how often socialist parties become co-opted into the bureaucratic, legal, and parliamentary channels of state institutions. Nevertheless, this means that our collective political positions and issues must satisfy every participant as they are presently constituted, which leads to a politics of the lowest common denominator. Furthermore, in the name of autonomy, our affinity groups neglect how each of our uncoordinated tactics inadvertently interfere with and altogether prevent those of others. Thus, the diversity of tactics necessarily becomes a *disparity of tactics*. Indeed, the lack of broader accountability “privileges risk-taking, regardless of whether the majority believes such risks are worthwhile, effective, or justified” (Ross 2003, 296). This adventurism further divides us as certain activists aspire to a kind of Socialism in One Person. Our organizations and strategies must be even more co-constituting than the many oppressions against which we struggle.

Third, we suppress rather than solve the problem of leadership. Many radical leftists justifiably condemn the ways in which socialist parties and organizations have reproduced social inequalities through their internal relations and practices. In contrast to the often hierarchical and bureaucratic structures of socialist parties, much of the radical left now advocates for a movement of movements (Mertes 2004). Indeed, it is crucial that we decentralize and democratize our political organizations and spaces. But this usually becomes a horizontalism that rejects formal leadership. Inevitably, informal leaders emerge. Since they are privileged enough to be initiated into the unspoken rules of the informal structures, they are largely unaccountable to the communities who they claim to represent (Freeman n.d.). Because this new form of vanguardism is covert, it would be all the more pernicious had it not proven so ineffective.

Fourth, we neglect the persisting importance of the state. Widespread rejections of the political party as a form of organization are often associated with the optimistic assertions that, in the age of globalization, nation-states and national struggles are of diminishing importance. Those who espouse “Think globally, act locally” correctly expose the constraints on democratic spaces imposed by international institutions, trade agreements, currency zones, and new forms of imperialism. Nevertheless, they often ignore that nation-states are not superseded by, but rather are the facilitators of, globalization (Panitch 1994, 63). The prevalent depictions of contemporary capitalism as postindustrial or postmaterialist attempt to transcend in thought the social relations we have been unable to transcend in practice. The recent waves of technological and social innovations are staggering, but they remain developments *within* capitalism (Albo 2007, 12). An eroding collective memory and

the obsession with academic novelty tend to neglect the extent of historical continuity in our era. Indeed, the only things new under the sun are the carbon emissions that disastrously trap its rays.

Finally, disengaging from the state cedes much political space and operational terrain to ruling classes. It is true, Holloway's anti-power politics has helped to cultivate a healthy wariness of co-optation by government institutions. Nevertheless, by rejecting all electoral politics as a legitimization of the state, much of the radical left relies, often unconsciously, on an anarcho-reformism<sup>3</sup> which can only make radical demands from outside of the state. Consequently, we allow the atrophy of the collective capacities necessary to *transform the state* and stifle the development of new such capacities. Furthermore, there are uncomfortable parallels between anti-power politics and the dominant neoliberal assertions that public institutions are inherently corrupt and inefficient. Ruling classes have harnessed widespread discontent with government bureaucracy to promote the marketization, privatization, and deregulation of state institutions and practices. To the extent that the radical left engages in the big refusal, we hasten these attacks on the welfare state, redistributive measures, and social programs. Indeed, the neoliberal hollowing of the state is complemented by a neo-anarchist *Hollowaying* of the state. By abstaining from this terrain of politics, we play the game of the neoliberals "as conscientious objectors play the game of the conquerors."<sup>4</sup> Surely, we cannot glorify dirty hands, "right up to the elbows" (Sartre 1989, 218). But if the anti-power milieu has clean hands, it is only because they hold them above their heads in surrender as the tide of blood creeps up their legs.

Anti-power politics has proven to be as unable to challenge capitalism from outside of the state as is any purely party politics from the inside. Transcending capitalist society and the state might very well depend on reconciling the best aspects of both of these equally one-sided tendencies. Indeed, this split has divided the radical left throughout the history of its resistance to capitalism. We can describe these two long-standing tendencies as *parliamentarism* and *extra-parliamentarism*.

On the one hand, for the parliamentarist tendency, to the extent that the state is democratic, it embodies universal liberties, not the power of the capitalist class and elite groups. This tendency argues that the radical left can use this state to fully realize these liberties in ways that preserve the continuity between the partial democracy permitted under capitalism and the full democracy allowed by socialism. For the parliamentarist tendency, the most important factor is a sufficiently strong and long-lasting governing majority that can fundamentally transform the hindrances to full democracy in civil society. Nevertheless, this tendency, historically exemplified by the social democrats, has been completely absorbed by the state. It can reform capitalism, but not *transform* it.

On the other hand, the extra-parliamentarist tendency believes that even the most democratic of states is essentially controlled by the capitalist class and ruling groups. Therefore, instead of attempting to win the already existing state power, this tendency builds alternative institutions in its shadows. Rather than being co-opted

into the inferior forms of merely representative democracy, it creates qualitatively different forms of participatory, deliberative, and direct democracy. Ultimately, this tendency envisions long preparations for what will be a sudden and total break with capitalist institutions, either by violently smashing them or through a more non-violent exodus from them. Those in the former subtendency, exemplified by the communists, have typically remained dependent on and lacked real control over the state that they have “conquered.” Thus, they resort to recruiting the former state officials and administrators of the ruling classes. This, among other causes, has meant that they tend to replace the capitalist state with a command economy that is just as undemocratic, if not more so. Those in the latter subtendency, exemplified by the anarchists, altogether refuse to operate on the terrain of the state, which, when it can no longer ignore them, easily crushes them. Despite all of their differences, these two subtendencies meet a similar fate. They can oppose capitalism, but not *transcend* it.<sup>5</sup>

In recent decades, the balance has shifted toward the extra-parliamentarism of those who espouse anti-power politics. As is often the case, they point to the shortcomings of parliamentarism without being sufficiently critical of their own attempts to change the world without taking power. But the pendulum might be swinging to the other tendency given the emergence of the new radical left parties, the “parties of a new type,” in Latin America, Europe, Turkey, the Philippines, Tanzania, and elsewhere (for more on this, see chapters 3 to 6 in this volume). Even Holloway’s major inspiration, the Zapatistas, have recently announced their intention to engage in electoral politics (Niembro 2017). Nevertheless, the new radical left parties are beginning to fall into the problems typical of traditional social democratic parties, as is illustrated by the ways in which the Syriza government has become co-opted into the Greek state and the institutions of the European Union (see chapters 2 and 3). These parties do not sufficiently heed the criticisms leveled by anti-power politics. Indeed, it has been the case historically that both the parliamentarist and the extra-parliamentarist tendencies bend the stick so far in their own directions that they turn it into a dull boomerang capable only of glancing the arguments of the other side before returning to their own. Surely, this is the most narcissistic of weapons.

In what follows, I will first discuss the shortcomings of purely extra-parliamentary politics. Then I will explore the flaws of the narrowly parliamentarist approach. Finally, I will introduce some of the general issues of how to begin reconciling these two tendencies, a project that is tackled much more concretely in the essays that comprise this collection.

## II

There are several, likely insurmountable, practical problems for any attempt to change the world without taking power. These problems will arise for extra-parliamentarists whether they envision nonviolent mass withdrawals from the state or violently smashing the state.

Those who espouse anti-power politics often treat it as a general model that is applicable to every capitalist country. But when genuinely autonomous institutions have actually competed with their national states for political legitimacy and sovereignty, it has been under the most exceptional and temporary circumstances. It occurs amid defeat in war, as was the case for the Paris Commune, the Russian soviets, and the councils in post-World War I Germany and Austro-Hungary, or defeat in colonial war, as was the case for Portugal in the 1970s. It also arises in response to direct attacks by fascist forces, as with Spain in the 1930s. In all of these cases, parliamentary institutions were nonexistent or much weaker and more corrupt than is typical (Sirianni 1983, 91–98; Bensaïd 2007). In every other case, autonomous institutions have been tolerated by the central state because they exist in single neighborhoods or in rurally isolated areas that do not directly encroach upon its power, as is true with the significant achievements of the Zapatistas. To paraphrase Wainwright (2006, 52), there is a lot of autonomy on the margins.

Beyond these rare cases, autonomous institutions are confined to local levels and limited scales. The bulk of their activities have been focused on supervising governmental agencies and providing basic necessities, such as food, fuel, and housing. Where they have grown beyond local levels and when they are established in more urban, populous, and politically central locations, they are short-lived. Therefore, these autonomous institutions do not last long enough to show the majority of people that they are a legitimate alternative to the sovereign nation-state. While the case of the Russian soviets before the Bolsheviks took power is an important inspiration for projects to develop parallel institutions, it is even more exceptional. It was aided by the collapse of Russia's outdated state, its relative isolation from the rest of Europe, and the length of time that its "dual power" organs lasted, which was comparatively lengthy, but still less than a year (Sirianni 1983, 109–10, 117). Even if similar conditions emerge again, there are other profound obstacles to anti-power politics.

The most frequent criticism of attempts to build autonomous institutions is that, wherever they gain much significance, they will face constant state repression (Bensaïd 2006, 10; Callinicos 2006, 63–64). This not only includes outright coercion. It also has more subtle forms. Agencies comprised of volunteers who deliver important services like health and education are harassed by the state over things like licensing. Furthermore, the proposed alternatives to political parties, such as unions, workers' councils, and neighborhood councils, have often benefitted from the existence of sympathetic political parties (Sirianni 1983, 111–13). These can create supportive legislation and hold back the coercive state apparatuses. Nevertheless, even if state repression is somehow overcome, there are a number of other significant shortcomings.

If autonomous institutions grow beyond the local scale, they can not mobilize the resources necessary to meet society-wide needs. Consequently, these institutions face permanent fiscal crisis. Governments will not grant taxation powers to organizations that are not connected to existing state institutions. It would be

impossible to organize a disciplined withdrawal from tax collection, not only because this would be difficult to coordinate but also because of widespread fears of interrupting the public services upon which workers, the poor, and the marginalized especially depend. Furthermore, it would be quite difficult for autonomous institutions to coordinate and fund their activities beyond local scales for an extended period of time. Among other things, they would have to contend with elected municipal governments that control services above the local level and are backed by fiscal reserves from provincial, state, and national governments (Sirianni 1983, 112–14; Albo 2007).

This proved difficult even in Red Vienna in the 1920s and 1930s and Red Bologna in the 1970s, where a variety of councils were supported by radical left municipal governments. For example, when Bologna dramatically expanded schooling and established parent-teacher councils, the central government in Rome interfered by allocating a mere 25 teachers for its afternoon schools in 1972–73 compared to the 2,000 it sent to Milan in 1974 (Jäggi, Müller, and Schmid 1977, 124). Furthermore, some radical left governments have provided conditional institutional and financial support to civic initiatives like councils and services while also prioritizing their autonomy, even from these left governments themselves. Take, for example, the ways in which the Australian femocrats in the 1970s and the Greater London Council in the 1980s supported and greatly expanded women-led childcare cooperatives and rape crisis centers (see chapters 9 and 10).

Any attempt to fundamentally transform capitalist society also needs to form alliances with state workers, especially the front-line providers of public services (Therborn 1978, 279–80). But attempts to create autonomous institutions on large scales will not win support from otherwise sympathetic state workers. Since their jobs depend on the public sector, they “would support the *democratization* of administrative apparatuses, but hardly their *decomposition*” (Sirianni 1983, 114). It is not merely that disaffected state workers are capable of wide-ranging sabotage of revolutionary efforts. More importantly, public sector unions can also be positive, active participants in democratizing state structures and empowering egalitarian social movement and labor movement organizations (see chapters 8 to 11). Take, for example, Toronto immigration officers in the late 1980s. Fed up with the lousy services they were forced to provide, they formed coalitions with immigrant rights groups, and, in coordination with them, engaged in a work-to-rule campaign for more resources, boycotted overtime and excessive caseloads, and saw only as many clients as could be reasonably served during the working day. The joint picket lines of these producers and users of public services garnered such significant community support that the government was forced to respond by hiring 280 new immigration officers (see chapter 11). Indeed, establishing councils between the providers and users of public goods would go beyond specific reforms and begin to transform the state.

Another reason why alliances must be formed with state workers is that autonomous institutions have never managed highly integrated and complex

administrative systems above local scales. The knowledge necessary to plan and run industry on national scales cannot be cultivated merely through improvisation (Sirianni 1983, 118). Furthermore, a sum of autonomous institutions linked by a system of mandates likely cannot develop a collective will, a spirit of compromise within the bounds of a generally recognized solidarity. For example, during popular participation in urban planning, if a town opposes having a waste-collection center that they would rather pass off to their neighbors, this requires some form of centralized arbitration to distribute benefits and burdens between legitimate interests (Bensaid 2007). Indeed, this would be crucial for, among other things, ending the environmental racism that locates undesirable facilities in racialized communities.

During the crucial early period of any revolutionary transition, it is likely that there would need to be in place an already existing nation-wide infrastructure. This long-term and widespread cultivation of democratic capacities, of both the skill and the will, is crucial not only to prevent major societal disorganization and disintegration. It is also necessary to account for the fact that, when autonomous institutions reach a certain scale, they have often prioritized their own survival and become quite competitive with each other. Take, for example, the Russian case: "The soviet system was continually plagued by problems with credentials, forged mandates, co-optation of outsiders into executive organs, violation of formal divisions of authority, highly uneven representation due to the lack of consistent formal regulations, and the disproportionate influence of the more powerful, strategically located, or politically favored factories, unions, garrisons, and local soviet bodies" (Sirianni 1983, 104–5). In other similar cases of dual power—such as the Spartacists in Germany, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo in Spain, and the Hungarian council government—these problems occurred to the extent that they attempted to displace the existing state institutions. During revolutionary transitions, this has often provoked attempts to counter the widespread disorganization and competition through authoritarian centralization (Sirianni 1983, 106–7, 117–18). Thus, autonomous institutions are susceptible to becoming precisely that which they intend to avoid.

These are some of the major problems that will confront any attempt to change the world without taking power. Louis Blanc's (1964) refrain about the state remains true: "Not to use it as an instrument is to encounter it as an obstacle" (232). The risks of potential co-optation inherent to the struggle for public office are profound, but they entail fewer difficulties than altogether refusing to operate on the terrain of the state. This attempt to cut the Gordian knot forgets that the state holds the sword. It substitutes an impossible strategy for one that is merely excruciatingly difficult.

Holloway (2010) neglects these obstacles because he makes at least two theoretical errors. The first occurs when, in his discussion of the dangers of co-optation, what he says about entering the state is also true of every other significant institution in capitalist society, including the spaces he affirms as legitimate sites of struggle. For example, he explains that the state hierarchically separates those who create the authoritative ideas and those who merely carry them out. Therefore, we



should disengage from the state because it converts the innate human capacities for creative activity (what Holloway calls “power-to”) into the authority of some over others (what he calls “power-over”). “It is absurd,” Holloway asserts, “to think that the struggle against the separating of doing can lie through the state, since the very existence of the state as a form of social relations is an active separating of doing. To struggle through the state is to become involved in the active process of defeating yourself” (214). Nevertheless, this “separating of doing” is no less true of capitalist *production* in which workers are separated from creative control over their work by capitalists who own and discipline their labor power. And yet, Holloway does not think that we should disengage from workplace struggles (156). Otherwise, how can he praise the struggles of Liverpool dockworkers or migrant workers? The same can be said of other institutions that have often been crucial for reproducing capitalist society and yet remain essential terrains for democratic struggles, such as families, schools, and healthcare.

These inconsistencies ultimately stem from Holloway’s second theoretical error: he contradicts himself on the matter of *functionalism*. This is the theory that state actors pursue specific policies and strategies because the state’s function is to reproduce society as a whole. Initially, Holloway argues that, although the state is a capitalist state, “it cannot be assumed, in functionalist fashion, either that everything that the state does will necessarily be in the best interests of capital, nor that the state can achieve what is necessary to secure the reproduction of capitalist society” (2010, 94). He wisely rejects functionalist explanations of the state. They are a form of circular reasoning. These explanations argue that the capitalist state promotes certain policies because they functionally reproduce capitalist society, and that these policies functionally reproduce capitalism because they are supported by what is obviously a capitalist state. This is not particularly illuminating. Every state action that does not lead to the total collapse of capitalism is deemed functional to capitalism (Albo and Jenson 1989, 209n55). And yet, when Holloway asks if we should attempt to win state power, he replies, “The state is a process of reconciling rebellion with the reproduction of capital. It does so by channelling rebellion into forms which are compatible with capitalist social relations” (2010, 232). Holloway thereby resorts to functionalism when he argues that we should disengage from the state because it unavoidably channels anti-capitalist struggle back into the reproduction of capitalism.

Even if this channelling is not inevitable, however, we must nonetheless admit that socialist political parties have often become thoroughly absorbed by the state. Before we can attempt to reconcile the salvageable aspects of both the parliamentarist and extra-parliamentarist tendencies, we must first detail the shortcomings of previous strategies for changing the world by taking state power.

### III

Many on the radical left reject parliamentary politics because they believe that it will inevitably lead to what is called the social democratic trap. In general, this is the idea

that, when socialist parties achieve political power during periods of social crisis, their attempts to transform capitalist society through the state often do little more than improve living conditions under capitalism. When leftist governments fail to transition from reform to revolution, they fall into the social democratic trap by “carrying out ‘better than the right’ *the same policies as the right*” (Gorz 1968, 114). Ultimately, these socialist governments save capitalism from itself.

The misgivings of many radical leftists are certainly warranted. The parliamentarist tendency, throughout its history, has been regularly co-opted into the standard practices of state institutions. Amid the onset of World War I, the socialist parties of the Second International did not call for proletarian solidarity and revolution across nations but, rather, voted to support their respective countries in the hostilities. In the post-World War II era, social democratic parties suppressed their members’ militant demands and struggles for greater popular control of workplaces and banking institutions. Most recently, the Syriza government in Greece accepted the austerity memorandum of the European Troika (the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund) despite the unprecedented opposition in the national referendum of July 2015 (see chapters 2 to 4).

Indeed, the parliamentarist tendency has fallen into this social democratic trap so often that we cannot explain it merely as the betrayal of socialism by individual socialists. But neither can we explain it simply in terms of an abstract institutional logic of the state. Rather, our explanations must strike the right balance between, on the one hand, the systemic obstacles to transforming capitalist society and, on the other hand, the failure of socialist strategies to sufficiently account and prepare for these obstacles amid circumstances over which we have had some control.

In the standard liberal theories, modern society is comprised of a plurality of interests between which the state is a more or less neutral arbiter. If the government tends to favor certain interests more than others, it is because those interests have organized into interest groups and policy networks capable of mobilizing the citizens, resources, and practices necessary to influence government. Conversely, the best critical theories of society and the state contend that capitalism is the scene of systemic inequalities between different classes and groups (Clarke 1991; Aronowitz and Bratsis 2002). Ours is a capitalist society because a minority of people, the capitalist class, has private ownership and control over capital, the property necessary for production, including the land, worksites, instruments, materials, financial assets, and labor power. The capitalist class also attempts to maintain its rule through mutually reinforcing alliances with those privileged groups whose power is based on co-constituting forms of oppression. Furthermore, this ruling bloc absorbs and cultivates representatives and leaders from the upper strata of oppressed groups. For these reasons, the government is not simply a state in capitalism, but rather it is a *capitalist state*. It is systemically biased toward the capitalist class and allied elites (see chapters 3, 4, and 7).

The capitalist state has three levels of bias (Wright 1994, 93).<sup>6</sup> Each successive level is an ever deeper trench by which the ruling class defends its control over the

state. It is only when democratic socialist governments and movements begin to traverse the final trench that we will have any chance of fundamentally transforming capitalist society. Until that point, no matter how profound our achievements, we remain within a capitalist state.

The first level of bias is *interpersonal*. Most state officials come from the capitalist class or have been recruited and educated by its organizations: the private schools, the exclusive clubs, the corporate boards, and the philanthropic initiatives. Therefore, state officials tend to share social networks and worldviews. Whereas the children of the working class are raised, in the ruling class *they are groomed*.

The second level of bias in the capitalist state is *institutional*. Getting elected and influencing those who have been elected typically require significant financial resources. Given that the capitalist class has private control of productive property, they and their allies have more of these than other groups. Furthermore, the capitalist class has the institutional connections and the insider's knowledge of state structures and governmental practices that come from the electoral machines and policy networks, the elite lawyers and expert advisors, the seasoned lobbyists and senior bureaucrats, and the discreet back channels and decadent fundraisers. As Levins and Lewontin (1985) note, "Hundred-dollar-a-plate dinners sustain the body politic, not the body physical" (262). Indeed, that figure, laughable by today's standards, would have to be adjusted not only for inflation but also for the ever-higher concentration of wealth.

The interpersonal and institutional levels of bias within the capitalist state are significant, but they cannot sufficiently explain the social democratic trap. For this, we must turn to the final trench. The third level of bias in the capitalist state is *systemic*. In order to continually reproduce itself, the state requires tax revenues. These are derived from incomes, which depend on continuing investment and economic growth. Since the capitalist class controls most economic production as their own private property, they are free to refrain from investing when they deem the circumstances unprofitable, unpredictable, or politically unpalatable. When a government attempts reforms that encroach upon the power of the capitalist classes, they often respond with capital strikes, the refusal to reinvest profits in continuing and expanding production. They also engage in capital flight by pulling their financial resources out of the country and reinvesting them elsewhere. This lack of private investment by the capitalist class reduces economic growth, incomes, and tax revenues, which thereby hinders the ongoing activities of government (see chapter 4). That is why, systemically, the state is a capitalist state.

This is the paradox of socialist governments in capitalist states. They are typically brought to power by alliances within and beyond the working classes between the exploited and the oppressed. These socialist governments initiate their promised reforms, such as expanding redistributive measures and the welfare state, affirmative action and other equity policies, environmental regulations, nationalization of strategic economic sectors, public control of financial institutions, and so on. Then, the capitalist class reacts with, among other countermeasures, investment strikes and

capital flight. This reduces the funds by which socialist governments can implement their programs and provokes society-wide economic downturns and crises that hurt those with the least resources. When these burdens become too much to bear, the diverse constituencies of workers and their allies vote their own parties out of office (Bowles, Edwards, and Roosevelt 2005, 521–23). Socialist parties have often stumbled upon the first two trenches of the capitalist state, but, for socialist governments, the third trench, which is by far the deepest, is the classic source of the social democratic trap.

Any democratic socialist government must recognize from the outset that, because productive property is privately owned, substantive reforms will necessarily provoke confrontations with the capitalist class and economic crises. Governments can pressure capitalist enterprises but cannot force them to invest against their interests. It is impossible to transform capitalism while cooperating fully with it (Panitch 1986, 79). If radical left governments are unable or unwilling to follow through with the conflicts that their initial successes will inevitably ignite, they will create their own obstacles (Gorz 1968, 118). Therefore, democratic socialist parties and movements must campaign for government office by explicitly promoting their intentions to use these crises to extend and deepen democratic institutions and practices in the economy and broader society. When corporations engage in investment strikes and capital flight, they annul their responsibilities over the economic production upon which the whole society depends to meet our needs. This, among other things, justifies bringing that otherwise unused productive property under the public control and, more importantly, the *democratic control* of workers and their communities (see chapter 4).

The only way to traverse the third trench is through simultaneous challenges to the multiple sources of power of the capitalist classes and ruling groups. This not only requires democratic transformations of the state through which they wield political coercion. We must also confront their systemic sources of power in other significant social spheres, including our families, communities, and economies. In particular, it requires challenging their private ownership of productive property through which they wield economic coercion against a state even when they do not directly control it as the ruling political party. We cannot defer a strategy for appropriating and democratizing privately owned productive property. It must inform our practice from the very beginning, because transforming the systemic biases of the state will require not merely parallel but *interconnected* transformations in the state and in the broader society.

Take, for example, campaigns for free and accessible mass transit. There are numerous reasons why they embody the kind of politics that could bridge the extra-parliamentary and parliamentary divides. These campaigns can unite diverse groups in common struggle, especially those who are most dependent on public transit, including women, people of colour, youth and the elderly, people with disabilities, and the working class. Furthermore, since mass public transit is much more energy efficient and ecologically sustainable than many other forms of travel,

it is crucial for the major collective issue of our time, climate change. Indeed, because these campaigns require a broad range of knowledge, skills, and actions, they will result in the disparity of tactics unless they are connected to a broader political strategy. Establishing mass transit could otherwise have unintended consequences, such as gentrification. These campaigns, therefore, need to go beyond attempts to address the overlapping interests of a broad and diverse patchwork of groups. Rather, the strategy must be genuinely *co-constituting*. Identifying and combatting not only each and every oppression but also their dynamic enmeshing and blending is the condition of overcoming all oppression (for particular case studies that emphasize this, see chapters 5 to 7 and 9 to 11). Free and accessible mass transit will also strengthen and expand the public sector (see chapter 9). Eliminating transit fares removes the policing function of transit workers and shifts public services from disciplining users toward providing for social needs (see chapter 11). Furthermore, these campaigns could foster councils between the providers and users of public services, between the unions of transit operators and transit riders, thereby bridging the struggles of social movements, labor movements, and state workers.

In fact, these kinds of political strategies not only offer a tangible and relatively immediate campaign, but, if the dramatic expansion of public goods is combined with the democratization of their production, distribution, and consumption, they also point toward longer-term goals and strategies. For example, when Lisbon transit workers went on strike, instead of withholding their labor, they refused to accept fares. This “good work strike” not only put financial pressure on their government employer, but also won the support of the public who relied on the service. Indeed, these transit workers offered a glimpse of a totally decommmodified future, a vision of transcending capitalism and the state. Furthermore, developing mass public transit will not only require progressive taxes, but also industrial strategies based on the green transition of our economies. The scale of these transformations demands political parties in government with mandates to nationalize and democratize key industries and financial institutions. This could expand public participation in the economy through long-term planning mechanisms that are based on collaborations between public banks and enterprise boards. For example, certain regions could convert their declining automobile industries toward producing mass transit infrastructures and vehicles. This will bring sustainable and socially useful jobs to areas devastated by deindustrialization and high unemployment, including those places that have become the focus of far-right, xenophobic movements and parties. Finally, egalitarian attempts to win and fundamentally transform state power are likely premature unless there have also been massive campaigns for workers’ control that develop the capacities, strategic relationships, and confidence necessary to democratize production on a mass scale.<sup>7</sup>

The parties of a new type are promising because, having emerged from egalitarian social movements, they have the potential to build interconnected organizations and struggles that can challenge the capitalist class and its allies at their multiple sources of power in the realms of government, production, and social reproduction.

Nevertheless, we must learn from the recent experiences of Syriza whose connections with the solidarity movements have dwindled since forming the government in Greece. Take, for example, the scene in Mexico, which is quickly becoming a microcosm of the familiar splits within the radical left between its extra-parliamentary and parliamentary tendencies. Separate from the Zapatistas, a party of a new type is emerging. The Movement for National Renewal (MORENA) is a pluralist party of egalitarian social movements that has a horizontal, grassroots structure. By 2014, MORENA had thirty-four thousand committees in twenty-five hundred municipalities. Its leader, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who came very close to winning Mexico's presidential election in 2006, has an extremely tense relationship with the Zapatistas (Niembro 2017). It is true, Zapatismo has confronted some of the limits of an extra-parliamentary politics. Nevertheless, MORENA should be equally wary of the limits of parliamentarism. According to Jesús Ramírez Cuevas, a prominent member and the editor of its free newspaper,

MORENA's platform represents a substantive change, an alternative project for the nation, an in-depth vision of radical transformation, but the electoral reform and the economic and political programs are more moderate. It doesn't foresee the expropriation of large companies or the transformation of the market economy but it does intend to create a counterweight and strengthen social economy, social ownership, and the agencies of the state to change the direction of the economy. Finally, it must be a decision of society how deep the change must be and to which extent, but it isn't the political decision beforehand from a vanguard that decides to impose a change, either socialist or closer to capitalism. (quoted in Ross and Rein 2014, 24)

Of course, revolutionary initiative must come from the majority of people, not a vanguard: "It is better to have no socialism than an undemocratic form of it" (Glaser 1997, 157–58). Nevertheless, even if deferring the question of appropriation is more conducive to recruitment and party unity in the short term, a MORENA government that is able to "change the direction of the economy" will provoke confrontations with the capitalist class that will likely cause economic crises and significant burdens on the party's members and supporters. Ruling classes will claim that these crises are not the result of systemic inequalities but of an incompetent utopianism that shows once again that radical left governments cannot manage national economies. If we do not prepare for this from the outset and thus get elected on misguided pretenses, we will prove the ruling classes right.

Despite the disagreements between the extra-parliamentarist critics and the parliamentarist supporters of taking power, both tend to conflate it with taking office. Indeed, Holloway does not explain what is entailed by taking power as distinct from merely taking office. Therefore, he does not establish the strongest possible argument for his opponents' theory before trying to refute it. What, then, is the distinction between taking office and taking power? Whereas taking office only

surmounts the interpersonal and institutional biases of the state, taking power begins to transform its systemic bias. This requires a series of interconnected democratizations in both the state and in the broader society. Otherwise, the lack of it in one realm will leave a bastion of strength from which ruling classes can ultimately stifle it in the others. It is not that we must move from the streets to the state, but that our movements must extend from the streets to the state. This is why we must try to reconcile the best aspects of both the parliamentarist and extra-parliamentarist tendencies.

#### IV

Since we must challenge the ruling classes and groups on various fronts, both in the state and in their manifold sources of power in other significant social spheres, the radical left cannot simply bring together the extra-parliamentary and parliamentary tendencies. We must genuinely reconcile them. Beyond Holloway's aforementioned theoretical mistakes, this is where he makes a fundamental strategic error. Holloway notes that many current political movements, including the pro-Zapatista movement that he extols as a model, feature collaborations between those who support and those who reject engaging on the terrain of the state:

This seems to me to be good. Any movement for radical change will be, and should be, a dissonant mixture of positions and forms of organisation. My position is not at all one of ultra-left sectarianism: I understand my argument as an argument within a movement, not as an argument to divide or exclude. The aim is not to create a new Correct Line. It is precisely because the movement is a broad one, and because we are all confused (whatever our degree of ideological purity), that it is important to discuss clearly. The fact that those who channel their struggles towards the state combine with those who reject the state as a central point of reference should not prevent us from saying clearly that we should be aware that there is an enormous tension between the two approaches, that the two approaches pull in opposite directions. (2010, 236)

In this, Holloway affirms what we can call a diversity of strategies. He merely points to the tension without attempting to resolve it. This will have fairly obvious consequences in the long term. If parties and movements remain satisfied with this tenuous balance, if they do not attempt to develop a collective will and a common strategy among their members and allies, then there will be no process of mutual transformation. Consequently, their extra-parliamentary and parliamentary wings will persist in their equally one-sided tendencies.

On the one hand, the extra-parliamentary wing will likely fail to develop the influence and the democratic mechanisms within the political party that are necessary to check those party leaders and members who would attempt to take government office in premature, opportunistic, or strategically problematic ways. Furthermore, they will likely remain detached from political activities within state institutions,

which can perpetuate a moralizing purity that condemns as co-optation any of the party's maneuvers and compromises, even those that genuinely pave the way for further democratizations. Finally, there will not be enough actively engaged party members who remain outside of the state offices and ensure that the party and the affiliated organizations have a life independent of the government (see chapters 2 to 6). Therefore, the extra-parliamentary wing will prevent itself from becoming, as Lafrance and Príncipe put it, a "loyal opposition" to the party-in-the-state (see chapter 3). They will be unable to push those party-members who are the elected officials, advisors, administrators, and state workers toward ever-greater democratizations of the state.

On the other hand, the parliamentary wing will likely become distant from their allies in the party and the movements as well as from their broader constituencies. Their positions within the party will strengthen, making it unbalanced, because they hold the promise of getting elected and thereby access to state resources and influence. This can only intensify the myopia of those party members within the state who are constantly attempting to navigate the institutional balance of forces, make principled compromises, engage in necessary horse-trading, and win the crucial votes. Since the parliamentary wing will be those who most frequently and directly interact with state officials, unless there are counterweights within their own party and affiliated organizations, they are likely to be increasingly influenced by this governing elite. Indeed, they will begin to listen to the state administrators and advisors who say, "Wonderful, Minister, you're putting all this Party thing behind you, and really working for the Department—that's so fine of you" (Crossman 1972, 63). As they narrow their horizons, they could begin orienting the party toward a national interest above the struggles between classes and social groups. Consequently, they will tend to prioritize moderation and social harmony rather than the agonistic social conflicts that are necessary for egalitarian change. Furthermore, they will tend to accept the existing structures of the state, overemphasize parliamentary debates and timetables, and focus mobilizations around the next election (Panitch 1986, 92).

All of this will perpetuate the divisions of labor between, on the one hand, the parliamentary organizations of the party and, on the other hand, their allied organizations in the egalitarian labor movements and social movements. Struggles in workplaces, communities, and families will not be politicized in ways that can transcend their fragmentation and, indeed, their sectionalism. Meanwhile, government reforms will be achieved through elite power brokerage in bureaucratic, legal, or parliamentary back channels. This stifles attempts to bridge these divides by opening the conceptualization, deliberation, and implementation of radical reforms to a more active popular control in ways that develop our democratic capacities (Magri 1970, 116, 127–28; Hammond 1988, 259–60; Panitch 1986, 64). Indeed, we must go beyond a more equal balancing between the extra-parliamentarist and parliamentarist tendencies, which, "in practice, might boil down to a compromise between 'below' and 'above'—in other words, crude lobbying by the former of the latter, which is left intact" (Bensaid 2007). Mutual transformations toward a more



collective will and common strategy require the interpenetration of these elements.

We are in the wake of two successive eras from which emerged two different forms of political organization, neither of which have proven adequate. The industrial age, which gave us Lenin's "party of iron," was pervaded by these metallic metaphors, including Goethe's "great, eternal iron laws," Marx's "iron laws of history," Lassalle's "iron law of wages," Bismarck's "through blood and iron," Weber's "iron cage," and, of course, Michels's "iron law of oligarchy." Conversely, the fluidity of our so-called postindustrial age is saturated with a more liquid language, including Berman's "perilous flow of modernity," which floods into Foucault's post-modern preference for "flows over unities," Barthes's "power flows," Deleuze and Guattari's "economy of flows," Castells's "spaces of flows," Leitch's "local effects and global flows," and Hardt and Negri's "global informational flows." This culminates in Holloway's praise for anti-power politics as the "social flow of doing" (2010, 28). In his diversity of strategies, however, the hierarchy of the party and the horizontalism of the movement of movements sit uneasily beside each other. Instead of a genuine synthesis between the best aspects of both, this only builds the solid structures of the party of iron in the dynamic current of the flow of doing. But then the structure corrodes and collapses into water that has become too toxic to nourish. This combines the worst of both worlds.

We are caught between, on the one hand, the conviction that the party cannot be annihilated, only the individual can be annihilated, and, on the other hand, the aspiration for more than a movement, less than a party. But network politics, coalition-building, and a movement of movements are as one-sided as is any party that would attempt to become the only significant base of struggle. The nonsectarian interactions between the parties of a new type and the egalitarian social movements demonstrate what our principle could be: More than a movement, *more than a party*.

We should not be too quick to settle accounts with twentieth-century socialism. Furthermore, we require historical, empirical, and comparative analyses of the persisting interpersonal, institutional, and systemic constraints on challenging and transforming state power and capitalist society in the twenty-first century. After numerous theorists criticized Holloway for failing to sufficiently ground his anti-power politics in historical analysis, he responded, "Spit on history, because it is the great alibi of the Left, the great excuse for not thinking. Make any theoretical or political argument about revolution and the response of the Revolutionary Left is to bring you back to 1902, to 1905, to 1917, to 1921" (2006, 19). It is true, history can be used in this way, but it need not be. Moreover, we can be as phlegmatic as we like, but, when history spits back, it is with the force of a tsunami.

That is why the authors in this volume base their analyses in historical case studies, both past and present. Part I provides broad historical context for these debates. In chapter 2, Leo Panitch offers a sweeping historical survey of the attempts by working class movements to develop their democratic capacities. He then poses the enduring questions of democratizing our political parties and the state.

Part II canvasses some of the most important recent attempts to challenge for state power by bridging social movements with other political vehicles, such as new political parties and empowering forms of legal mobilization. In chapter 3, Xavier Lafrance and Catarina Príncipe discuss the nonsectarian relationships between egalitarian social movements and the parties of a new type through a comparative analysis of the new radical left parties in Greece, Germany, Spain, and Portugal. In chapter 4, Thomas Chiasson-LeBel explains the rise and receding of the Pink Tide in Venezuela and Ecuador by situating it in long-standing debates about the extent of state autonomy under capitalism. In chapter 5, Kali Akuno gives a firsthand account of how a dynamic balance between popular assemblies, solidarity economies, and independent political organizations helped get a radical leftist lawyer elected mayor of Jackson, Mississippi. He also evaluates what their time in office means for these movements going forward. In chapter 6, Erdem Yörük explains how the success of an emerging party of a new type in Turkey is based on, among other things, the legacies of Kurdish resistance, the self-organizing of women's movements, and the significance of social services as a battleground for transforming the state. In chapter 7, Michael McCann and George I. Lovell offer lessons about how the law need not necessarily be only a tool of oppression. If movements use it in radically democratic ways, legal mobilization can make significant contributions to declaring, establishing, expanding, and enforcing transformative human rights.

Part III explores different aspects of radically democratizing public administration. In chapter 8, Greg Albo explores the three major traditions of public administration, including the Westminster technocracy of the postwar period, the new public management of the neoliberal era, and, the most substantial alternative posed by the radical left, democratic administration. In chapter 9, Hilary Wainwright makes an important contribution to epistemology by discussing the various theories of knowledge offered by different traditions of public administration. She then uses case studies to show how radical left governments can democratize the economy and the state by supporting and expanding the practical knowledge of workers in the public sector and in solidarity economies. In chapter 10, Tammy Findlay argues that, just as surely as feminist theories and practices have often neglected the state, so too have theories of democratic administration neglected intersectional feminism. She offers three case studies that reveal in various ways the promise of a femocratic administration. In chapter 11, Greg McElligott discusses democratizing coalitions between the providers and users of public services. He then asks, can these successes be replicated in some of the most coercive parts of the state?

If the fundamental transformation and transcendence of capitalist society must occur not wholly, but substantively, in, against, and beyond the state, how can we develop a democratic socialist politics that has a strategy for preventing co-optation into government institutions and ruling classes? The fruit of our contributions to this question is *From the Streets to the State: Changing the World by Taking Power*.

## NOTES

1. See Holloway's essays in Clarke (1991). He is also a contributor to the London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group (1980).
2. For a magisterial account, see Eley (2002).
3. I owe this term to David McNally.
4. This phrase is borrowed from Maritain (1952, 161), who uses it in a radically different but not unrelated context. To be sure, there is just as much moralizing among the collaborators as there is among the conscientious objectors.
5. This paragraph is influenced by Luxemburg (2004, 301–8) and the analysis of Geras (1985, 133–93).
6. I thank Vivek Chibber for pointing me to this work.
7. This example is inspired by an actual campaign (Socialist Project 2013), as well as by Costello, Michie, and Milne (1989, 255–61) and Stanford (1999, 397–402).

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