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0521629845 - Taking Power: On the Origins of Third World Revolutions

John Foran

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Taking Power

Taking Power analyzes the causes behind some three dozen revolutions in the Third World between 1910 and the present. It advances a new theory that seeks to integrate the political, economic, and cultural factors that brought these revolutions about, and that links structural theorizing with original ideas on culture and agency. It attempts to explain why so few revolutions have succeeded, and so many have failed. The book is divided into chapters that treat particular sets of revolutions: the great social revolutions of Mexico 1910, China 1949, Cuba 1959, Iran 1979, and Nicaragua 1979; the anticolonial revolutions in Algeria, Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe from the 1940s to the 1970s; the reversed revolutions of Iran (1951–53), Guatemala (1944–54), Bolivia (1952–64), Chile (1970–73), Jamaica (1972–80), Grenada (1979–83), and Nicaragua (1979–90); failed revolutionary attempts in El Salvador, Peru, and elsewhere; political revolutions in the Philippines, South Africa, and elsewhere. It closes with speculation about the future of revolutions in an age of globalization, with special attention to Chiapas, the post-September 11 world, and the global justice movement.

JOHN FORAN is Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he is also involved with the programs on Islamic and Near Eastern Studies, Latin American and Iberian Studies, and Women, Culture, and Development. His books include *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution* (1993), *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran* (1994), and *Theorizing Revolutions* (1997).

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No book can ever convey the greatness of a people in revolt.

Enrique Oltuski, *Vida Clandestina:*

My Life in the Cuban Revolution,

translated by Thomas and Carol Christensen

(New York: Wiley, 2002), xxii

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Acknowledgments

Discounting an essay written in 1975, while a sophomore in college, on the revolutions of early modern Europe (I had a rather elegant – or was it sophomoric? – theory that those on the bottom ended up on the top), this book traces its own origins to 1990, when I began to think about the Iranian revolution – to which I had devoted my research in the 1980s – in comparative perspective. But for a revolution in my own life – the arrival of Cerina in 1996 and then Amal in 1998 – this might have taken only *ten* years. I therefore thank my editors at Cambridge University Press, and especially Sarah Caro, for their patience with me over the years.

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