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Shutting Down the Streets: Political Violence and Social Control in the Global Era, by **Amory Starr, Luis Fernandez, and Christian Scholl**. New York/London: New York University Press, 2011. 207pp. \$67.84 cloth. \$23.00 paper. ISBN: 9780814741009.

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This book speaks to three sets of issues: First, it carries out an analysis based upon direct participant observation of some of the more radical edges of the global justice or alterglobalization (or anti-capitalist) movement, including the wing commonly associated with the term “black block.” Second, it discusses the new forms of state repression, surveillance, and control of urban space that have been carried out by security forces during global economic or political summits that faced large protest movements from the alterglobalization movement. Third, it constitutes an interesting and instructive example of using the Foucauldian theory of power and resistance as the basis for the study of some very contemporary developments.

One of the hallmarks of contemporary social protest – at least since Seattle 1999 – has been its global character, with international groups of demonstrators assembling at various gatherings like the WTO, the G8, the FTAA, or NATO. Within those demonstrations, a relatively small number of participants have engaged in direct action of various types, sometimes committing minor acts of violence against property, security

barriers, or (very rarely) police. Those kinds of demonstrators, often young and male, are the focus of this study.

The authors reject as simplistic any “false dichotomy between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ protestors” that would tend to marginalize or even criticize very much groups like the black block (95). Attempts by groups like the European organization ATTAC, which have much larger constituencies, to discourage confrontational tactics by the black block in order to make mass street protests with tens of thousands of participants more viable tend to be viewed here as capitulations to the logic of social control.

Some of these controversies, which are also debated among those further to the left than ATTAC, are actually articulated best in an appendix to the book. It consists of a long dialogue between the well-known autonomist Marxist sociologist John Holloway and an adherent of the black block, Vittorio Sergi. Sergi attempts to turn around Holloway’s objection to what he sees as the hijacking of a larger demonstration by the black block and its “macho tone” (156) by arguing for the “right” of “all forms of protest” as part of a commitment to diversity and democracy within the movement (159). But as Holloway implies, some of those forms of protest actually limit the rights of other protestors, who may not wish to put themselves in physical danger, who have paid jobs or caregiver functions to return to, who have to worry about their immigration status, etc. Holloway could have also gone further, and argued that the radical wing of the alterglobalization movement needs to consider not only a variety of forms of resistance, but also broader humanistic conceptualizations of new social relations on a radical, egalitarian basis.

The discussion of state repression and social control at the various global summits -- and the astronomical cost of this security, sometimes \$1 billion per event -- is a particularly cogent part of this book. Over the past decade, we have seen police in the U.S. and elsewhere attempt to control protest by cordoning off space through the use of barriers and other devices, in effect caging in demonstrators on the very streets on which

they are protesting. This became notorious during the protests against the Iraq war in the U.S., but as this study shows, these kinds of tactics are a global phenomenon. In one sense, the police have been returning to efforts like those in Chicago in 1968 to keep demonstrators confined to outlying areas of the city, something that sparked the “riots” (really police riots) when protestors insisted on going to the city center and blocking the streets. The new forms of police repression are subtler and more pervasive, however, as they sometimes allow protest in the central city, but in such a way as to create almost a form of imprisonment for the protestors.

The Foucauldian basis of the book is articulated explicitly from the outset. In a programmatic theoretical statement that many sociologists would regard as dangerously peremptory, the authors hold that while Hobbes and Mead saw social control as societal protection, and Marx saw it as part of the class struggle, “Foucault connected the two approaches and, further, showed how power is pervasive in control *and* resistance – even showing how those polarities interpenetrate” (3).

Their overall Foucauldian perspective does bear some fruit, for example, when the authors write of “techniques of enclosure, segmentation, subdivision, of function-related units, and ranking, which Foucault describes as part of the emergence of a new type of social control taking place in hospitals, jails, and schools,” and which they tie to “the governance of public space around summits.” Here, they are on solid ground insofar as what is really original about Foucault’s work, particularly *Discipline and Punish*.

The biggest problem I had with this book’s uncritical recourse to Foucault, and in particular to his concept of resistance, is that Foucault’s writings on resistance explicitly reject utopian or Marxian forms of thinking that would conceptualize real alternatives to the given social arrangements. These forms of thinking would also evaluate present-day forms of resistance based upon what kinds of alternatives they espouse (their emancipatory project, or lack thereof). Foucault’s celebration of resistance to modern power, without troubling himself too much about the goals of that resistance, led him into

an embarrassingly uncritical support of the Iranian ayatollahs of 1979. In similar fashion, it allows the authors of *Shutting Down the Streets* to celebrate the black block without asking too many questions about the assumptions and goals of its political project, which are of course not as problematic as those of the Iranian regime. (Nevertheless, to their credit, they do allow a voice substantially more critical than their own, Holloway's, to appear in the appendix, as discussed above.)

Despite such shortcomings, *Shutting Down the Streets* remains an original work, fired by a commitment to social justice, and deeply cognizant of the everyday brutality of those societies – like the USA – that pride themselves on being democracies subject to the rule of law. In the best traditions of sociology, this book has taken up some marginalized sectors of society, and shown how their actions and intellectual frameworks are rational, at least in their own terms.