



Renewing Socialism: Democracy, Strategy, and Imagination

By Leo Panitch



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Renewing Socialism opens with an exploration of the contemporary meaning of revolution and reform, beginning by stressing the appropriation of both terms into the rhetoric of the political right. Panitch examines the failure to realize socialism's revolutionary promise through an analysis of social democratic parties and the 'politics of compromise' they advanced and their loss of radical vocation today. Panitch turns to an examination of the limitations of the Communist regimes and offers an account, based on personal observations in 1990, of the demise of Communism in Russia. The failure of Radical intellectuals in the West failed to take sufficient responsibility for the improvement of Marxist political theory, and especially of its theory of the state in any transition to socialism. Indeed, one of the greater ironies of the socialist experience is that the remarkable relevance of the Manifesto for developing an agenda for the renewal of socialism in our own time really became clear after the demise the Communist regimes. Panitch argues the salience of class will have to be brought more centrally back into the analysis and strategy of the left. The capacities of working people, so stunted under capitalism, must be allowed to develop to the furthest extent possible through their own organizations that incorporate both the diversity and issues represented by the new social movements. The first challenge before any process of socialist renewal is that of getting people to think ambitiously once again. This ambition means not abandoning Marxism, but rather reviving what Bloch called its visionary 'warm stream' alongside the 'cold stream' of political economy. It means adding a new layer to Marxist theory to help socialists appreciate that we need to figure out how to foster the accumulation of capacities in addition to analyzing the accumulation of capital.



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Renewing Socialism: Democracy, Strategy, and Imagination By Leo Panitch Bibliography

- Rank: #3174401 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Westview Press
- Published on: 2001-07-13
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .63" w x 6.00" l, .76 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 248 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Leo Panitch is Distinguished Research Professor of Political Science at York University, Toronto, and a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He is the co-editor of *The Socialist Register*, published annually in London and New York. His books include *The End of Parliamentary Socialism* (Verso 1997), *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms*, *Working Class Politics in Crisis*, and *Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy*.

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