

Obituary

## Leo Panitch 1945-2020

Tuesday 22 December 2020, by [CANEPA Eric](#), [Transform! Europe](#) (Date first published: 21 December 2020).

**We at transform! europe, along with many around the world, were shocked to hear of the death of Leo Panitch from COVID-19 in Toronto on 19 December 2020.**

Leo had recently been diagnosed with multiple myeloma—a type of cancer that affects the plasma cells located in the bone marrow. Justifiably optimistic about treatment, he had the misfortune to contract COVID in hospital, which in his weakened state proved fatal.



Since 1985, Leo co-edited the *Socialist Register*, the annual journal founded by Ralph Miliband and John Saville. The Register has been hugely influential among the English-speaking left throughout the world as an alternative to both centrist social democracy and sectarian radicalism. It has also had a decisive impact on the remarkable maturation process of the young left intellectuals in the US largely in and around Jacobin and DSA, dating from the time of Occupy Wall Street in 2011. There is no doubt that Leo and the Register, both based at York University in Canada, helped make it possible for this emerging left to be both radical and at the same time connected to the mediations of real politics in the US and abroad and to a richer socialist culture. In the process, they learned, for example, from the experience of the left wing of the UK Labour Party, for whom Leo's work was a key point of reference. Above all, they have moved some distance away from the self-marginalising Puritanism that has been characteristic of so much of the US radical left over the last decades. One cannot help thinking that Leo's very embrace and enjoyment of life, his warm-hearted 'Menschlichkeit'—to borrow a word from Yiddish, a language he grew up with in the I. L. Peretz Folk School in Winnipeg—may have in some measure exerted a salutary influence in North American radical-left milieus.

Leo's theoretical work—frequently co-authored with Sam Gindin—focused on state theory, the US empire and the global capitalist system, the dilemmas of parliamentary socialism, the (re)building of the working-class's sense of its own capacities, and the recovery of a realistic utopian imagination.

He had a great many close friends. So many individuals in the world looked forward to his visits, to going to jazz concerts with him, to exploring cities and cuisines with him....

Leo's gift for long-lasting friendship, for comradeship, for creating a larger family, means that condolences are due to his extended family: first of all, to his long-standing life partner Melanie, an author and human-rights activist; to his daughter Vida and son Maxim; and also to his childhood friend and frequent co-author Sam Gindin and his comrades at Socialist Register, most notably including co-authors Greg Albo and Colin Leys.

Goodbye dear chaver and friend,

**Eric Canepa**

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### **Leo Panitch and transform! europe**

Leo Panitch was a close friend and supporter of transform! and its goals. He has contributed with articles in our Yearbook [\[1\]](#), he has been a guest in events we have organised, a proponent of various calls and initiatives we have launched for issues of European and international interest.

Our most recent collaboration with Leo was the web-interview "The Left Reflects on the Global Pandemic" in April 2020 [\[2\]](#). He was the first intellectual who spoke to us on the pandemic crisis and the potential responses of the left.

Eric Canepa

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### **Books by Leo Panitch**

*Searching for Socialism: The Project of the Labour New Left from Benn to Corbyn* (co-authored with Colin Leys), Verso, 2020.

*The Socialist Challenge Today: Syriza, Corbyn, Sanders* (co-authored with Sam Gindin and Stephen Maher), Merlin Press, 2018.

*The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire* (co-authored with Sam Gindin), Verso, 2012.

*In and Out of Crisis: The Global Financial Meltdown and Left Alternatives* (co-authored with Greg Albo and Sam Gindin), PM Press, 2010.

*Renewing Socialism: Transforming Democracy, Strategy and Imagination*, Merlin Press, 2008.

*Global Capitalism and American Empire* (co-authored with Sam Gindin), Merlin Press, 2004.

*The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (co-authored with Colin Leys), Verso, 2001.

*From Consent to Coercion: The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms* (co-authored with Donald Swartz), University of Toronto Press, 1993, 2003; Garamond, 1988.

*Working Class Politics in Crisis: Essays on Labour and the State*, Verso, 1986.

*The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power*, University of Toronto Press, 1977.

*Social Democracy & Industrial Militancy: The Labour Party, the Trade Unions, and Incomes Policy, 1945-1974*, Cambridge, 1976.

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## **P.S.**

- Transform! europe. 21 Dec 2020:

<https://www.transform-network.net/blog/article/leo-panitch-1945-2020/>

- Leo Panitch (1945 - 2020) was Canada Research Chair in Comparative Political Economy and Distinguished Research Professor of Political Science at York University. An editor of *The Socialist Register* for 25 years, his many books include *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire* (with Sam Gindin).

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## **Footnotes**

[1] <https://www.transform-network.net/publications/yearbook/>

[2] <https://www.transform-network.net/blog/article/transform-europe-podcasts/>