

Marx, Engels, and Marxisms

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The Marx renaissance is underway on a global scale. Wherever the critique of capitalism re-emerges, there is an intellectual and political demand for new, critical engagements with Marxism. The peer-reviewed series *Marx, Engels and Marxisms* (edited by Marcello Musto & Terrell Carver, with Babak Amini and Kohei Saito as Assistant Editors) publishes monographs, edited volumes, critical editions, reprints of old texts, as well as translations of books already published in other languages. Our volumes come from a wide range of political perspectives, subject matters, academic disciplines and geographical areas, producing an eclectic and informative collection that appeals to a diverse and international audience. Our main areas of focus include: the oeuvre of Marx and Engels, Marxist authors and traditions of the 19th and 20th centuries, labour and social movements, Marxist analyses of contemporary issues, and reception of Marxism in the world.

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To Alan and Byron

SERIES FOREWORD

THE MARX REVIVAL

The Marx renaissance is underway on a global scale. Whether the puzzle is the economic boom in China or the economic bust in ‘the West’, there is no doubt that Marx appears regularly in the media nowadays as a guru, and not a threat, as he used to be. The literature dealing with Marxism, which all but dried up twenty-five years ago, is reviving in the global context. Academic and popular journals and even newspapers and on-line journalism are increasingly open to contributions on Marxism, just as there are now many international conferences, university courses and seminars on related themes. In all parts of the world, leading daily and weekly papers are featuring the contemporary relevance of Marx’s thought. From Latin America to Europe, and wherever the critique to capitalism is reemerging, there is an intellectual and political demand for a new critical encounter with Marxism.

TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS

This series bring together reflections on Marx, Engels and Marxisms from perspectives that are varied in terms of political outlook, geographical base, academic methodologies and subject-matter, thus challenging many preconceptions as to what ‘Marxist’ thought can be like, as opposed to what it has been. The series will appeal internationally to intellectual communities that are increasingly interested in rediscovering the most powerful critical analysis of capitalism: Marxism. The series editors will ensure that authors and editors in the series are producing overall an eclectic and

stimulating yet synoptic and informative vision that will draw a very wide and diverse audience. This series will embrace a much wider range of scholarly interests and academic approaches than any previous 'family' of books in the area.

This innovative series will present monographs, edited volumes and critical editions, including translations, to Anglophone readers. The books in this series will work through three main categories:

Studies on Marx and Engels

The series will include titles focusing on the *oeuvre* of Marx and Engels which utilize the scholarly achievements of the on-going *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, a project that has strongly revived the research on these two authors in the past decade.

Critical Studies on Marxisms

Volumes will awaken readers to the overarching issues and world-changing encounters that shelter within the broad categorisation 'Marxist'. Particular attention will be given to authors such as Gramsci and Benjamin, who are very popular and widely translated nowadays all over the world, but also to authors who are less known in the English-speaking countries, such as Mariátegui.

Reception Studies and Marxist National Traditions

Political projects have necessarily required oversimplifications in the twentieth century, and Marx and Engels have found themselves 'made over' numerous times and in quite contradictory ways. Taking a national perspective on 'reception' will be a global revelation and the volumes of this series will enable the worldwide Anglophone community to understand the variety of intellectual and political traditions through which Marx and Engels have been received in local contexts.

Toronto, Canada
Bristol, UK

Marcello Musto
Terrell Carver

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PREFACE

This book complements my books *Red-Green Revolution* (2018) and *Democracy Denied* (2019). In *Red-Green*, I explore the politics and technology of ecosocialism, raising questions of political strategy in the context of planetary emergency; in *Democracy Denied*, I discuss obstacles to revolutionary transformation in the United States.

The present work, while retaining the sense of urgency that drove its predecessors, steps back to examine the broad contours of recent history (Part I) while also going more deeply into certain particular struggles (Part II). The constituent chapters (or parts of chapters) were originally written at various times over a period of more than 40 years, but I have reworked much of the material and have updated data and references throughout. Only in two cases (Chap. 3 and the first full section of Chap. 4) was it essential—because of historical interest—to preserve the texts in their original form (changing only the titles and, in Chap. 3, reformatting the references and adding section-headings).

The book's temporal vantage point is thus for the most part consistent—grounded in the present—but there remain among its chapters differences in style of argumentation that correspond to the varying original venues and audiences for which I was writing. I have tried to make the chapters uniformly accessible and (with the noted exceptions) current, yet without smoothing over their distinctive polemical textures.

While the book covers a lot of ground, it lays no claim to completeness. The narratives, although spanning many countries and multiple issue-areas, are illustrative rather than exhaustive; they reflect in part the range of my own direct experience, which I allude to in the Introduction. No

individual vantage point can comprehend the totality of human perspectives and strivings, but any of us can begin to grasp the underlying reality if we keep in mind a pair of partly clashing principles:

On the one hand, in a relationship of domination, the oppressed knows the oppressor better than vice versa. This is because the oppressor has an outsized role in the life of the oppressed, which makes understanding the oppressor's *modus operandi* a matter of great importance—sometimes a matter of life and death—to the oppressed. On the other hand, each of us has the capacity, through interaction with and historical knowledge of others, to at least partly transcend the limitations arising from our own origins, whatever these may be.

This brings us to an observation that is not made often enough (at least not with full reflection on all its applications): namely, that oppression harms not only the oppressed but also the oppressor. It has always done so in the sense of cutting the oppressor off from his (and sometimes her) full humanity. But it now does so in an additional way, in that the structures generated by oppression threaten, through their ongoing destructiveness, the continuation of *all human life*.

Socialist practice has thus come to focus centrally on addressing environmental breakdown, but in doing so, it must engage—as it has always had to do—every dimension of human activity. Within its limits, this book seeks to stretch our thinking both about what needs to be done and about what *can* be done. It does this not only by reminding us of why the rule of capital must be overcome, but also by discussing, as dispassionately as possible, the strengths and the weaknesses of various approaches that have been taken to carrying out that task.

The political rhetoric around environmental restoration often invokes the opposition between the Global North and the Global South: the North destroys the environment and the South suffers the consequences. This is a reasonable first approximation to history, in the rough sense that the great conquering powers and the societies of mass consumption are situated mostly in the Northern temperate zone while a disproportionate share of global poverty is concentrated elsewhere.

But the correspondence is imperfect, as suggested most strikingly by the power of the current fascist ruler of Brazil—in collaboration with imperial capital—to wreak destruction on what have aptly been termed “the lungs of the world.” The point is that the geographical placement of oppressors and oppressed does not fall into any simple spatial pattern. There are oppressors in the South and there are victims in the North.

Similarly, within the US, despite the prevalence of white racism in the power structure, there are individuals of European descent who live in abject poverty while a very select few of African lineage have entered the ranks of the top “1 percent.” The dividing lines, in terms of policy-interests, are neither geographical nor “racial,” but are the expression of class division.

One often hears it said that the Global North owes an environmental debt to the Global South. It would be more accurate to say that capital and its agents owe such a debt to the human species as a whole, as well as to the intricate systems of biodiversity that they have done so much to destroy. This is not to claim that the scope or urgency of the requisite compensatory steps is everywhere the same, but it *is* to identify who is currently responsible for *taking* those steps. It is also to suggest the pattern of alliances or antagonisms that will shape the struggle to obtain their compliance or – ultimately – to replace them.

What humanity now needs is education, discussion, and action on a massive scale, informed by this awareness. If the arguments in this book contribute in any way to advancing such a process, my goal in putting them together will have been met.

Somerville, Massachusetts
October 2019

Victor Wallis

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This book would not have come into being without the initiative of Marcello Musto. Thanks to his confidence in me and his patient insistence, I was inspired to weave together the disparate themes that have drawn my attention since the mid-1970s, with real hope that the resultant whole would be more than the sum of its parts. Babak Amini and Terrell Carver provided important advice and encouragement along the way. Michelle Chen and Rebecca Roberts, at Palgrave, helped me navigate the final stages of submission. Arumugam Hemalatha, at Spi Global, provided indispensable assistance in assuring accurate production.

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Finally, all my work has been nourished by the wisdom, the advice, and the moral support of my life-partner, Inez Hedges.

Praise for *Socialist Practice*

“*Socialist Practice: Histories and Theories* is critical reading for all who care about the future sustainability of humanity. At a time of planetary dystopia, Victor Wallis offers a sweeping intellectual contribution to understanding the global economic, political, and ecological fissures threatening humanity. Drawing on impressive knowledge of Marxist and socialist discourse, Wallis masterfully unifies essential themes of the production of material and cultural resistance to the impending cataclysmic future through socialist transformation. Essential reading for all students of the politics and history of socialism.”

—Immanuel Ness, *Professor of Political Science, City University of New York, USA*, and author of *Southern Insurgency: The Coming of the Global Working Class* (2016)

“Wide-ranging, eloquent, accessible and inspiring, Victor Wallis’s collected essays in this volume embody an optimism about future political action, along with a fierce realism about the challenges we face as a planet. This is required reading for Marxists, socialists, organizers, feminists, Black Lives Matter folk, and anyone else who still hopes to avert the ecological/capitalist catastrophe now bearing down on us.”

—Hester Eisenstein, *Professor of Sociology and Women’s and Gender Studies, Queens College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York, USA*

“Victor Wallis, an exemplary activist-scholar whose solidarity work with prisoners has lasted for decades, brings to light the political orientation that guides his efforts. He notes that ‘the oppressed knows the oppressor better than vice versa’ and that oppression cuts all of us off from our full humanity. His book seeks to illuminate ways to restore balance to the earth and to all our lives. His history of liberation movements’ theory and practice is instructive. I hope his call for ‘action on a massive scale’ resonates widely.”

—George Katsiaficas, *former Visiting Professor of Sociology, Chonnam National University, South Korea*, and author of *The Global Imagination of 1968* (2018) and *Asia’s Unknown Uprisings* (2012, 2013)

“Today socialism is experiencing a remarkable revival under the mantles of democratic socialism and ecosocialism. But what do these new conceptions of socialism mean, what issues are being raised, and how are they related to the fundamental struggles of our time encompassing numerous forms of oppression and threats to human survival? In search for concrete answers, one could hardly do better than to read Victor Wallis’s concise and comprehensive book on *Socialist Practice*.”

—John Bellamy Foster, *Professor of Sociology, University of Oregon, USA*, and editor of *Monthly Review*

“Victor Wallis presents us not with the answers but with a framework through which we can look at the successes and failures of the global socialist movements and conceptualize a way forward. This book rejects despair and cynicism with an emphasis on facing reality. But this is also a book designed to provoke debate rather than shutting down principled exchanges. Agreement is not the requisite for reading this book. Rather, a desire for deep and substantive engagement toward the reconstruction of emancipatory politics.”

—Bill Fletcher, Jr., Senior Scholar, *Institute for Policy Studies, USA*, Executive Editor of *The Global African Worker*, and *former president of TransAfrica Forum*

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