

# Politics and Left Politics



# Politics and Left Politics:

*Studies of the Modern Left*

By

R. G. Williams

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Democracy, egalitarianism and cooperation -  
the essential values of Socialism.  
—Ralph Miliband



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## PREFACE

This book is a study of politics and Left politics. It is an attempt to examine Left politics in our society – to argue for Left politics. This book is a distinctively political book, with a political message. It tries to outline the modern politics of the Left – the politics of Socialism. It also, unapologetically, tries to argue for the politics of the Left – the politics of Democracy, Humanism, and Socialism. I believe in the politics of the Left. I believe modern Capitalist society is based on exploitation and oppression, and we need to replace it with something better. I believe Capitalism needs to be replaced by Socialism. I believe that politics, today, is about trying to change society – in order to build a better society.

Politics is struggle. It is specifically social struggle. Ever since the creation of modern politics, politics has been about trying to change society – or keeping society the same. The Left tries to change society – in order to build a better world. For the Left, today, politics is about the social struggle to build a better world.

Left politics is about trying to build a free humanity – a world of free people. Left politics is essentially about building a better humanity – a humanity based on the principles of Democracy, Humanism, and Socialism. Left politics, today, is about building Socialism – a society based on the principle of the free development of each and the free development of all.

The essays in this book are based on trying to understand various aspects of modern Left politics today – the struggle for a Socialist society, a free society, and a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. It tries to show how the Left, today, can still struggle for a better world. I believe that a rational analysis of modern society, specifically Capitalism, with sober senses, shows the need for Socialism – for a free society. If we look at Capitalism, today, rationally, we can see the need for a new and better society – specifically a society based on the free development of each and every human being. I believe that Socialism can create a better society than Capitalism. That is the driving argument of each of the essays in this book.

My view of Left politics is shaped by my own politics. I am a Socialist, a Socialist Humanist, a Democratic Socialist, and a Marxist. I believe in the need to build a society based on the principle of the free development of each and the free development of all. The essays in this book are Socialist essays. They argue, in one way or another, for Socialism. This book is a Socialist study. It is a Socialist Humanist study, in the tradition of Democratic Socialism.

Politics, in modern society, is very simple. It is a simple political choice based on political reality. The choice is either Socialism or Capitalism. I believe humanity needs to choose Socialism.

Modern society, today, is feeling the effects of exploitation, oppression, and Imperialism. Anyone with open eyes, and an open mind, can see this if they look at the world today. We need a changed society. We need a society based on real human freedom. I believe this makes the real argument for Socialism.

R.G. Williams

(2025)

# CHAPTER I

## POLITICS TODAY

This short essay is a study of politics. What is politics? What is politics for? What are political ideas? How should we understand politics? How can we use politics? In this short essay I want to argue that politics is a form of struggle. Specifically, politics is the struggle to make society better and to free humanity. Specifically, politics is the social struggle, within society, to change society. Clearly politics is important. Politics is a key social force in our world. Political struggles define our times. Political struggles change our society. Politics is clearly something we cannot ignore or dismiss. Politics is important. We must struggle to use politics – to change the world.<sup>1</sup>

What is politics? Politics is the practical struggle to change the world. What is politics for? Politics is for changing society. What are political ideas? They are ideas for understanding, interpreting, and changing society. How should we understand politics? We should understand politics as a tool – for changing society through social struggle. How can we use politics? We can use politics to change the world – to build a better society, to build a better humanity, to build a free humanity. Politics, in the end, is the practical social struggle to change the world.<sup>2</sup>

Politics is about social struggle. When we break down what politics is, to simple terms, it is always about social struggle – specifically the social struggle to change the world. All politics, in one way or another, is about the social struggle to change the world – by changing society. All politics is about either trying to change society or keeping society as it is. The basic divide in politics, between the Left and the Right, is shaped by the struggle to change the world. The Left wants to change the world – to build a better society.<sup>3</sup> The Right wants to keep the world as it is – to preserve existing society.<sup>4</sup>

Politics is about ideas. Politics is about combining both ideas and struggle to change the world – e.g. the combination of political theory and political action. All politics, today, is about combining theory and action – ideas and

struggle to change the world.

Politics, today, is one of the most important topics in the world – due to the crisis of our times. You cannot ignore politics. Politics is too important to ignore. For me, politics, today, is the struggle for Socialism – for a democratic, humanist, and Socialist society. Politics, today, is about the social struggle for Socialism. This is clear if we look at the reality of politics – in most countries and societies. This fact about politics has been clear since the emergence of politics, and especially modern politics. Politics, in practical terms, is organised social struggle – social struggle to change the world. All politics, and all political ideas and struggles, are based in social struggle. Politics, in our times, is about social struggle – between countries, societies, classes, ideologies, and movements. Politics, today, is being shaped by the reality of social struggle – the struggle to maintain or change society. Politics, today, is specifically a struggle between the Left and the Right. The Left seeks to change society – to achieve Socialism. The Right seeks to keep society as it is – by maintaining Capitalism. If we look at the world, today, since the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the crisis of 2008, we can see that social struggle is crucial to modern politics – both in the advanced Capitalist countries and the developing countries. Modern politics, today, is more and more being shaped by the crisis of 2008 – specifically the breakdown of Neo-Liberal Capitalism – and the possibility of social struggle. Our time, the early 21st century, is a period of major political struggle. This fact dominates the politics of our time.

Politics, it seems, has always been part of humanity. It is a constant of human life. Indeed, ever since the rise of humanity, out of the process of biological, sociological, and historical evolution, human beings have engaged in politics – e.g. in political struggles. Every human society, from the earliest times to today, has had politics – and political struggles. Politics is social struggle, between classes, societies, and ideas, and it has existed ever since human beings first struggled to shape themselves and their society. It seems that politics is a natural, inevitable, part of humanity – and human society. As long as there are human beings there will be politics – because politics, ideas, and social struggle, is part of humanity and cannot be separated from it. Politics is also a crucial part of actually changing the world – of creating a better world. To change the world, you always need politics – and political struggle – as politics is the practical mechanism for changing the world.<sup>5</sup> Most politics, political ideas, and political struggles, in one way or another, are about the struggle to change the world – either by changing society or by trying to prevent society from being changed. To be a human being, in a human society, is to be political. You cannot avoid

politics – especially since modern times, and especially since the rise of modern democracy. To understand politics, and politics today, is to understand humanity – and the constant struggle for human freedom. Politics, in the end, is about the social struggles of humanity. The best politics are the politics of trying to achieve human freedom – freedom for all of humanity.

Politics, today, is clearly important – and cannot be dismissed. Of course, politics has always been important – going back to the earliest times – but politics, today, is especially important because the politics of today always shape the society of the future. Politics, through social struggle, effectively creates and changes the world – so it is crucial to engage with it, especially if we wish to build a better society, e.g. a democratic, humanist, Socialist, and free society. If you wish to understand modern society, you must understand modern politics. If you wish to change modern society, you must engage with modern politics. Politics is also a vital force. It is a force which any self-respecting person must be engaged with – if they are serious about being a serious person.

Modern politics, the politics of our time, emerged in the early 19th century – following the Enlightenment and the rise of mass politics. Indeed, it was the revolutionary events of the early 1800s which created modern political ideas – following the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the rise of Capitalism. Modern politics, and modern political ideas, also really emerged from the experience of the French Revolution of 1789 – which really created modern political movements and theories. Indeed, it was the example of the French Revolution which really created modern politics – and the division of politics into the Left and the Right. Modern politics, today, is shaped by three major ideologies – Liberalism, Conservatism, and Socialism. These three ideologies, and their social movements, determine and shape all politics today – in all parts of the world. The Left stands for Socialism. The Right stands for Liberalism or Conservatism. The Left fights to change society – to achieve Socialism, democracy, and freedom. The Right fights to keep society as it is – to maintain Capitalism, and Capitalist society. Modern politics, since the beginning of the 21st century, is still shaped by the social struggle between the Left and the Right, and between Liberalism, Conservatism, and Socialism. Of course, there are other ideologies in the world, such as Fascism, the ideology of the Far-Right, but most modern politics is shaped by the ideas of Liberalism, Conservatism, and Socialism – in most countries. Modern politics is also shaped by the politics of democracy – following the rise of universal suffrage in the 1800s and 1900s, the rise of mass politics,

and the rising power of the people. All politics, and all political struggles, in the modern world, in one way or another, are shaped by the struggles between Liberalism, Conservatism, and Socialism, between the Right and the Left, and over the power of mass democracy.

Politics, of course, is about ideas – but the real basis of politics is social struggle. Ideas, theories, and ideologies, help to shape politics but the real power of politics comes from social struggle – particularly the social struggle between classes. To understand social struggle is to understand politics. If you want to understand politics, today, of course study political ideas – but always study the social struggles which shape politics. Politics, in the end, is always a struggle – a social struggle.

Most people know something about politics. It is a universal force in human society. Indeed, it is impossible to go through life without engaging with politics – in some form or another. Most people know that politics is important – that it can change the world. Most people also know that politics is about social struggle – specifically the social struggle within society, by social forces in society, to change society. This practical engagement with politics means that most people, especially in very political societies, know that politics is a force that can really affect their lives. Many people might be cynical about politics, but politics is crucial – especially if we want to change the world.

Politics is human. It is social action, by human beings, to change their society. Everyone uses politics. Politics is an inevitable part of living in society. Everyone has politics – and political ideas. Even the most apolitical person has political ideas. This fact, and this reality, means that politics is one of the universal forces in human society – and human history. If we are serious about changing the world, and creating a better society, then politics is one of the universal forces for creating social change. Politics is human, in a humanist sense, because it is about agency – the agency of trying to change the world.

Politics is social. Politics always emerges from within a society – never from outside of society. All politics is based on society – because politics is the practical expression of social struggle in society. Politics, in modern society, is especially social – because of the rise of modern democratic politics.

Politics is a spectrum. It is a spectrum of ideas, struggles, and forces. It is a spectrum of political ideas which come out of specific forces and forms of politics. Modern politics, since the French Revolution, is shaped by the Left-

Right spectrum. The Left, in politics, wants to change society – to make society more equal, democratic, and just. The Right, in politics, wants to change society to keep it as is – based on hierarchy, order, and a ruling class. The Left-Right spectrum has its problems, but it is the best way to understand politics – especially modern politics. Most people, in one way or another, fit into the spectrum of Left or Right, when it comes to politics.

Politics is universal. Every society has politics. This is because all societies have social struggles. Politics, both in theory and in practice, is a reflection of the social struggles in society. Where there is social struggle there is politics. Where there is politics there is social struggle. All politics, in one way or another, emerges from social struggle – from the social struggle of society.

Politics is a tool. It is a practical and powerful tool for changing the world. No social change, in human history, was ever achieved without politics. If you want to change the world, and are serious about it, you need politics – as a practical tool for achieving it. This is true of all politics and all political struggles – whether or not it is successful, whether or not it actually changes society. You need politics, as a tool, if you want to change the world.

Politics is a struggle. Politics is always about struggle. Politics is ultimately about the struggle – between individuals, groups, nations, societies, and classes – to change society, either through peace or war, through reform or revolution. Politics is the practical activity of trying to change the world – and the practical social struggle to change society.

Politics is social struggle. All politics, in the end, is about social struggle. All politics, since the beginning of human history, has been about social struggle. Ever since the emergence of modern society, politics has always been about the social struggle to change or maintain society – to push society forward, hopefully towards human freedom.

In our times, politics is clearly about struggle – specifically social struggle. Politics can always be linked back to social struggle – in some form or another. Every election, campaign, struggle, and conflict, in modern politics, in one way or another, is connected to social struggle. It is social struggle, not ideas, which really drives and determines politics. It is social struggle which drives forward the development of politics.

Politics is shaped by class. Indeed, all politics is shaped by class – by the reality of class society. Every class society – from ancient society to Feudal society to Capitalist society – has been shaped by class and by class society.

Most politics, in most societies, reflect class interests. Workers and capitalists are the main types of class in modern society. A worker and a capitalist usually have very different views about politics – because of their place in society, and because of their class. Most politics, in most societies, is a form of class struggle. Most politics, today, is shaped by the reality of class – by the reality of class in society.

Politics is shaped by class struggle. Almost every type of class society has been shaped by class struggle – and by the politics of class struggle. Ancient society produced class struggles between freemen and slaves. Feudal society produced class struggles between lords and serfs. Modern Capitalist society has produced class struggles between capitalists and workers. All politics, in every class society, is the product of the social struggle between classes. This will continue to be the case, in political and social terms, until the day humanity overcomes class and class society.

Politics is historical. Politics makes history – and is shaped by history. Every type of society has had politics – since the rise of human society out of evolution. Every form of society has had politics – and has been shaped by politics. The type of politics you have in a society is usually a product of wider society. Every society, in history and in politics, has produced its own type of politics.

Politics is shaped by history – by the history of society. Ancient society produces ancient politics. Feudal society produces Feudal politics. Capitalist society produces Capitalist politics. Socialist society produces Socialist politics.

Politics is also shaped by historical struggle – by the social struggles of history. Throughout history all politics has been shaped by the reality of social struggle. Class struggle, as the ultimate form of social struggle, shapes the reality of politics.

Politics is often brutal. While politics can be nice, quiet, and enlightened, politics is often nasty, brutal, and barbaric. This has happened quite often in the history of politics – especially during times of real political struggle. Indeed, in times of real social crisis, such as war, revolution, or counter-revolution, politics can be determined by violence – by the social reality of violence. Of course, violence is never ideal, especially in terms of building a better world, but violence is an inevitable part of social conflict, social struggle, and politics. You can avoid violence in politics sometimes, in history, but you cannot avoid it all the time. Violence is often a vital part of actually achieving politics – especially in societies where democracy does



not exist or where counter-revolution, reaction, or barbarism, has made democratic politics impossible. There is also the fact that violence can be justified, in some circumstances, in politics – either to defend social progress, the rights of others, or to defeat reactionary and barbaric forces e.g. Nazism. Social revolution, as the ultimate form of social change, often requires violence – as part of its politics – in order to actually achieve social change. We might not like this fact, but politics is often a form of war – a form of social struggle. Politics is war – and wars often involve bloodshed. The best way to avoid violence, in politics, is to actually achieve a society based on democracy and humanism – e.g. a society which does not require violent politics, e.g. Democratic Socialism.

Modern politics is shaped by the social struggles within modern society. Specifically, modern politics is about the struggle within society today – to change society or to keep society as it is. Politics, today, is shaped by the social struggle between the capitalist class and the working class – between the class who rules and the class who works. Politics, today, is also shaped by the struggle between the Right and the Left – between the Right, who want to keep society as it is, and the Left, who want to change society in order to achieve the freedom of humanity. Politics, today, is about the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism – between maintaining a society based on private ownership of production and a society based on the principle of the free development of each and the free development of all. Politics, today, is about the social struggle between all these different social forces – forces which are struggling within society, to change society.

Modern politics is shaped by ideas. While social struggles are the basis of politics, ideas are also vital for politics. Political ideas help to shape and create politics – in the form of social struggle. There are many different types of politics – and political ideas. There are democratic politics. There are anti-democratic politics. There are revolutionary politics and counter-revolutionary politics. Democratic politics argue for power to be in the hands of the people. Anti-democratic politics argue for power to be in the hands of despots, tyrants, kings, and capitalists. Revolutionary politics seek to fundamentally change society – through social revolution. Counter-revolutionary politics seek to prevent social change – by controlling society. Politics are also shaped by ideologies – specific forms of politics. There are Liberal politics. There are Conservative politics. There are Fascist politics. There are Socialist politics. Liberal and Conservative politics argue for a Capitalist society – based on private ownership of production, accumulation, and liberal-conservative forms of democracy. Fascist politics argue for oppression, barbarism, Imperialism, and tyranny, in order to

maintain Capitalist society. Socialist politics argue for a changed society – a society based on the power of the working class, a society based on democracy, a society based on humanism and democracy, a society based on the principle of universal human freedom. All of these politics, in the modern world, struggle between each other – in order to shape the politics and reality of society. All of these politics, in one way or another, are defined by social struggle – by the social struggle to change society.

The ultimate form of politics, today, is Socialist politics.<sup>6</sup> This is because only Socialism, as a form of politics, can really change society today – by overcoming Capitalism and Capitalist society. Socialism, as a society based on human freedom, is the ultimate form of politics – and the ultimate form of democratic politics. Socialists, like myself, believe in politics. For Socialists, politics is a social struggle for human freedom – to achieve human freedom. Specifically, politics is the social struggle for power – the struggle to win power, the struggle to keep power, the struggle to use power to change society. We believe that politics is vital for achieving a better society – for achieving Socialism, a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. For Socialists, politics is social struggle. For Socialists, politics is about using social struggle to achieve human freedom. For Socialists, politics is a process of achieving social struggle and human liberation. For Socialists, politics is about changing the world – to achieve human liberation, human freedom, and a better world. For Socialists, like myself, the best type of politics are politics which are democratic, humanist, and Socialist – e.g. Democratic Socialism.

Most people have ideas about politics. Most people, however, are often excluded from politics – except for voting from time to time. If we are to change the world, today, and build a better society, we need to bring more people into politics – especially into politics which are committed to democratic, humanist, and Socialist politics. Politics, in the past, was always about minorities (usually ruling classes).<sup>7</sup> Politics, today and in the future, always needs to be about the majority – the majority of humanity.<sup>8</sup> Politics needs to be about the emancipation of the majority – the freedom of the majority.<sup>9</sup>

The best politics are about emancipation.<sup>10</sup> They are about trying to make people free. They are about trying to create a society in which all human beings are free – every man, every woman, every child, every nationality, every race, every sex, every gender, every class, and every person. The best type of politics are those politics which are about achieving democracy, freedom, liberation, agency, and humanity, for all of humanity. The best

types of politics usually have reasonably good ideas – ideas which are about achieving a free humanity. The best type of politics are always politics based on emancipation.<sup>11</sup>

The worst politics are about oppression. They are about trying to keep people under control. The worst politics, in history, have usually been politics which have been about trying to control and dominate people – in order to exploit them, in order to oppress them. The worst sort of politics always need oppression – because their ideas are always based on anti-humanist views of humanity itself. The worst sort of politics are always politics based on oppression – because they need oppression to control and dominate people. Bad politics are always based on oppression.

If we want good politics, we need politics which are based on emancipation – and we must reject politics which are based on oppression.<sup>12</sup> I would argue that the best form of politics, for achieving emancipation and rejecting oppression, are Democratic Socialist politics – politics based on the principles of Democratic Socialism. The logic is simple then. If we want a better society, now and today, we must build Democratic Socialism.

## Notes

1. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (1848)
2. R. Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*, (1977)
3. E.P. Thompson, *Socialist Humanism*, (1957)
4. E.P. Thompson, *Socialist Humanism*, (1957)
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9. G.A. Williams, *Proletarian Order*, (1975)
10. K. Marx, *Provisional Rules of the International Working Men's Association*, (1864)
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# CHAPTER II

## LEFT POLITICS

This short essay is a study of Left politics.

What is Left politics? What are the politics of the Left? What are the goals of the Left? In very simple terms, Left politics is politics designed to change society – in order to achieve the freedom of each and every human being. The goal of the Left is human freedom – for each and for all. The Left, in basic terms, wants freedom – through emancipating humanity.

Left politics is a key part of modern politics. Indeed, it is a major force in our society – alongside the Right. The Left is a major political force – a force which struggles to achieve Socialism, a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. Ever since the 1800s, and the rise of modern politics, the Left is the force which has consistently struggled to change society – to make humanity free. If you want to understand modern politics you need to engage with the politics of the Left. If you want to understand the modern Left, you need to understand Left politics.

Left-wing politics is about achieving human freedom. It is about changing society, in order to achieve human freedom. The Left, as a side in modern politics, is committed to changing society – to achieve Socialism, Democracy, and Humanism. Left-wing politics, in the end, are politics which are committed to achieving a changed society – a better society, a free society, a Socialist society.<sup>1</sup>

Politics is one of the most important aspects of our society. Politics, in practical social terms, is a crucial part of the social struggle to transform society – to build a new and better society. Politics, today, is divided between the Right and the Left. The Right fights to keep the world as it is. The Left fights to change the world. The most radical, and powerful, form of politics, today, is Left politics – politics which are committed to building Socialism, Democracy, and Humanism.

Left politics is Socialist politics. The Left, in political terms, is the side of politics which believes in achieving a better society – through Socialism. For the Left, Socialism is freedom – a free society – because Socialism, as an ideal, is about achieving the free development of each and the free development of all. The Left fights to achieve Socialism – through the mass struggle of ordinary people, and the working class.

The Left, in social terms, is committed to changing society – in order to build a better society for all of humanity. The Left, in terms of politics, is a form of politics which is committed to achieving equality – as the basis of actually building a new and better society. It is also a form of politics which is committed to achieving the goals of the Enlightenment – a society based on liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Left politics, in the modern world, take many different forms – such as Socialism, Democratic Socialism, Social Democracy, Communism, and Anarchism, but the real basis of Left politics, in the modern world, is the commitment to building a new and better society – a society based on the principle of the free development of each and the free development of all.

Left politics is clearly a radical and powerful form of politics – a politics which can change the world, and has changed the world. It is through Left politics that we can build a society that is based on the free development of each and the free development of all. Left politics, today, has emerged out of the long social and political struggle to change the world. In modern society. Left politics have been crucial to the long struggle for human freedom. This fact means that only Left politics, as a form of politics, can actually achieve a new and better world today.

The Left, as part of modern politics, emerged from the experience of the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the rise of the modern world. It was the experience of the French Revolution, in particular, which created modern politics, the modern political spectrum, and the modern division of politics – between the Right and the Left. The Left, as the revolutionary, democratic, humanist, Socialist, and radical side of politics, emerged from the French Revolution. It emerged as the side of politics which believes that it is through achieving social change, transformation, and revolution, that we can achieve a better human society – a society based on liberty, equality, and freedom. This means that the Left, since its beginning, has been driven by a vision of politics and society that is based on achieving the freedom of humanity – the freedom of all humanity. The Left believes, fundamentally, in human freedom – human freedom through

human co-operation and solidarity. This vision of politics is summed up by the ideas of Socialism, Humanism, and Democracy. Socialism, Humanism, and Democracy are the three basic politics of the modern Left – since the 1800s, since the French Revolution, and since the Russian Revolution. The Left, since the early 19th century, has been committed to the vision that social change, in real terms, can achieve a better, and freer, form of humanity. The Left seeks social change, through ideas like Socialism, Humanism, and Democracy, because this will lead to human freedom – in practical terms – for all of humanity. The Left believes in freedom – for all. The Left believes in freedom for every man, every woman, every child, every nationality, every race, every sex, every gender, every class, and every person. The Left, as a form of politics, is about building a better society – an emancipated society. In order to achieve this, the Left opposes existing society – specifically existing Capitalist society. The Left opposes existing society, today, because it is based on exploitation and oppression – because it limits the ability of human beings to live good, free, and democratic lives. The Left, since the French Revolution, has gradually adopted Socialist, Humanist, and Democratic politics as the basis of its politics. The Left, in modern times, fights for Socialism, Humanism, and Democracy – as the basis of achieving a new and better society, a society based on human freedom.

Karl Marx, the great German Socialist, in the 19th century summed up the politics of the Left. He summed up the basic politics of the Left, of what Left politics are about, with his powerful phrase:

In the place of the old bourgeois society with its classes and its class antagonisms, there will be an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.<sup>2</sup>

Marx's vision of politics is simple. For Marx, and the Left, existing society (bourgeois Capitalist society) needs to be replaced with a new and better society (an association). This new and better society will achieve a society of freedom – freedom for all. This new society will achieve the free development of each and the free development of all – the freedom of each and every human being. Specifically, this vision of politics is about transforming society – from Capitalism to Socialism. Socialism, as the basis of Left politics, is about building real, democratic, humanist, freedom. This is the vision, and the reality, of Left politics. The politics of the Left are about transforming society – in order to achieve the freedom of all.

In this section of the essay, I want to briefly outline what I think are the three basic ideas of the Left – Democracy, Humanism, and Socialism. I

believe that these three ideas, as specific political ideas, are the ideas which make up Left politics – the politics of the Left. The Left, around the world, in its various forms, is united by the basic commitment to these three basic ideas. While the Left is often divided about how to achieve these ideas, in practice, the Left is basically united in the belief that it is through Democracy, Humanism, and Socialism that we can achieve a new and better society – a society that achieves what Marx called “the free development of all”. Left politics takes many forms, in the modern world, such as Social Democracy, Socialism, Democratic Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, etc., but what unites all sections of the real, modern, Left is the politics of Democracy, Humanism, and Socialism. These three ideas are the ultimate politics – the politics of human freedom.

I. Democracy. Democracy is power to the people – power to the majority. Democracy is about society being organised of, by, and for the people. Democracy is crucial to the politics of the Left – because the Left believes in the power of the majority – the working class – to change and make the world. All good politics have to be democratic politics – because democratic politics is about actually basing power, and society, in the hands of ordinary people – the majority.<sup>3</sup>

II. Humanism. Humanism is the idea of human agency – that human beings are important, that human beings have rights, that human beings can change the world. Humanism, as a modern idea, is about recognising the power and ability of human beings, as human beings, to think and act for themselves. Left politics, as a humanist form of politics, believes in the importance of Humanism – of human agency, human rights, and human dignity. Humanism is crucial to Left politics – because Left politics are about achieving human freedom, for each and for all.<sup>4</sup>

III. Socialism. Socialism is both a society based on the social ownership of the means of production, and a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. Socialism is crucial to the politics of the Left – because Socialism is how the Left can achieve a free and better society. Socialism, in economic, political, social, and intellectual terms, is the mechanism for achieving human freedom – a society of human freedom.<sup>5</sup>

Left politics is based on Democracy, Humanism, and Socialism.<sup>6</sup> They are the three key ideas which unite the politics of the Left. They are the essence of the Left. You cannot disconnect any of these ideas from the politics of the Left – without destroying what makes the Left. Any form of left-wing

politics, either now or in the past, which fails to maintain the politics of Democracy, Humanism, and Socialism, effectively betrays the Left itself. Democracy, Humanism, and Socialism are the politics of the Left. They are politics which can both interpret the world and change the world.

The key idea of Left politics is Socialism.<sup>7</sup> All Left politics, in one form or another, is about Socialism – about achieving Socialism. The goal and the vision of the Left is Socialism – a society based on the social control and ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. Socialism has many forms, but the most radical, powerful, and humanist form of Socialism is Democratic Socialism. Indeed, Democratic Socialism is the most authentic form of Socialism – Socialism which is committed to democracy and human freedom. The key political idea of the Left, in my view, is Socialism – specifically Democratic Socialism. It is the idea which unites the Left with the struggle for real human freedom. Socialism, today, in the politics of the Left, is the struggle against Totalitarianism and for Democratic Socialism.<sup>8</sup>

Left politics is also about organisation. In order to achieve Democracy, Humanism, and Socialism, there must be organisation. Organisation, in the form of political parties, is crucial to the politics of the Left. It is through political parties, specifically workers' parties, that the Left can achieve its aims – the freedom of humanity. A working-class party is crucial to all forms of Left politics. In order to achieve anything in politics you always need to be organised. The Left, when it is successful, is always organised – organised in a political party. Successful organisation, in the end, leads to successful politics.

What is Left politics? Left politics are democratic, humanist and Socialist. Left politics are those politics which consistently struggle for humanity – through democracy, humanism, and Socialism, for democracy, humanism, and Socialism. The Left, as a political force, exists, in the modern world, for the struggle to achieve a better world for humanity – a world based on a free humanity, a world that is democratic, humanist, and Socialist. The best parts of the Left, in the modern world, understand that human freedom cannot exist in a society that is based on exploitation or oppression – such as Capitalism. The best parts of the Left also understand that in order to achieve a better society we need Democracy, Humanism, and Socialism. It is this interpretation of the world, and the struggle to change it, which drives the Left. Politics is often complicated, but the basic ideas and principles of left-wing politics are very simple. They are politics for revolutionary and serious



social change – social change for freedom, social change for human emancipation. The Left, in the end, is committed to the basic struggle for human freedom. What is Left politics? It is politics for human freedom.

### Notes

1. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (1848)
2. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (1848)
3. R. Miliband, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*, (1994)
4. E.P. Thompson, *Socialist Humanism*. (1957)
5. K. Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, (1867)
6. E.P. Thompson, *Socialist Humanism*. (1957)
7. E.P. Thompson, *Socialist Humanism*. (1957)
8. G. Orwell, *Why I Write*, (1946)

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# CHAPTER III

## POLITICS AND LEFT POLITICS

### **I. The Left**

This essay is a study of the politics of the Left. Specifically, it is a basic outline of key Left politics – the politics of Democracy, Humanism, and Socialism. The Left, as a political force, is a force which struggles for Socialism – for a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. The struggle for Socialism is the struggle of the Left. Ever since the struggle for Socialism emerged there has always been a Left. Left politics and Socialist politics emerged out of the struggle for Socialism – which emerged out of the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution. It is impossible to think about modern politics or Socialist politics without thinking about the Left. The basis of the Left is Socialism. The political basis of the Left is Socialism. Since the 1980s the Left has gone through a difficult and long period. The period of Neo-Liberalism resulted in a great deal of defeat and reaction for the Left. This period needs to end. The Left needs to return to its basic politics and its basic struggle – the struggle for Socialism.<sup>1</sup>

### **II. The Left and its Politics**

The Left is a political force. This means that it has politics – politics which try to change society, humanity, and the world, hopefully for the better. Politics, effectively, is always the organised social struggle, usually by a social class, to change society – in its interests. Left politics, as a form of politics, is about achieving Socialism – about building a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. Socialist politics, therefore, is about the means of achieving the decisive social change which can lead to Socialism. Socialist politics, effectively, today, is how we can actually achieve Socialism – through the organised social struggle to change modern society.

What defines the Left, as a political force, is its politics – the politics of Socialism, Humanism, and Democracy.<sup>2</sup> The Left is for human freedom. It

is against human unfreedom. Indeed, the politics of the Left, ultimately, are defined by this basic commitment – to achieve freedom for all. This means that the Left, today, has the task of actively confronting and defeating all forms of exploitation and oppression in the world. This struggle, as a long struggle, is the struggle for freedom. It is the struggle to create a free humanity – freedom for every man, every woman, every child, every nationality, every race, every sex, every gender, every class, and every person, for every human being. This means that the Left is opposed to any form of society which is based on inhumanity – on human misery. This ultimately means that the Left is opposed to existing society – a society that is based on exploitation, oppression, war, violence, Capitalism and Imperialism. This means that the Left is against existing society. This means that the Left is for changing society – in order to build a better, human, society.

The political goal of the Left is to achieve human freedom – freedom for all of humanity. The Left justifies its politics on a complete, and total, belief in human freedom – in universal human freedom. For the Left, humanity should be free. Human beings should be free. They should be free because all human beings deserve to live free, democratic, and happy lives. This is an objective truth about humanity. In order to have a free humanity all human beings should be free. Freedom is universal. In order to build universal freedom, we must build a society based on the freedom of each and the freedom of all. This is the objective of the Left. The only way to build such society is to build Socialism – because Socialism is a society of universal human freedom. The only social force which can create Socialism is the working class. The goal of the Left is freedom. The Left seeks to achieve this goal through Socialism – through the free development of each and the free development of all.

The politics of the Left, in modern society, can be easily summarised. The basic politics of the Left are the politics of Socialism, Socialist Humanism, and Democratic Socialism. Socialism, because the Left wants a free society – a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. Socialist Humanism, because the Left wants a free humanity – a humanity of human freedom and human agency. Democratic Socialism, because the Left wants a democratic society – a society based on placing real political power in the hands of the people, by the people, for the people. If these politics are united, by the Left, they are unstoppable. They can create a better world.

The Left is a key force in modern politics. Indeed, it has been a key force in politics since the 1800s – since the emergence of modern politics. This means that it has political ideas, political hopes, and political struggles. These ideas, hopes, and struggles, shape the basic struggles of the Left – in the struggle to create a better world.

The Left is a political movement. It is part of politics – a key part of modern politics in modern society. Politics, in modern society, is divided between the Right and the Left. Modern politics, today, is the struggle between the Right and the Left. The Right, today, argues for Capitalism. The Left, today, argues for Socialism. The Left, in politics, is the side which argues for a free, equal, and emancipated humanity. It argues for the abolition of class and class society – in order to achieve a free humanity.

The Left is a historical force. The Left has existed since the beginning of modern politics – since the French Revolution of 1789. Indeed, the Left emerged out of the historical experience of social revolution which created modern society – during the 19th and 20th centuries. The rise of industrial Capitalist society, the ideas of the French Revolution, the rise of the modern working class, and the struggle for a better society, created the modern Left. The Left, as a political, intellectual, and social force, is a product of history – and a movement of history.

The Left is a social movement. Specifically, it is a social movement which is based on the real agency of human beings. The Left, as a movement, is broadly committed to human agency – to achieving human freedom through human agency. The Left, as a movement, tends to believe that the only way to achieve human progress is through the actions of human beings themselves. Social progress, for the Left, can only be achieved if human beings both interpret and change the world.

The Left is a working-class movement. Indeed, the Left is a movement which emerges from the working class – the class who do all the work in modern Capitalist society. More specifically, the Left is a working-class movement which fights for the freedom of the working class – because the working class is the exploited majority in Capitalist society and because the working class, as the majority, has the power to change the world – for the better. Organised labour, the movement of the working class, is the basis of the Left – in all societies and in all countries.

The Left is an international movement. It exists in all societies and in all countries. Indeed, every country in the world has a left-wing party or movement – or the potential for one. The Left is also an internationalist

movement – it believes that humanity should be a free, equal, and united humanity, a humanity that is freed from all forms of exploitation and oppression. This means, ultimately, that the Left is the only truly internationalist movement in world politics – because it is committed to achieving a united humanity and a free humanity.

The Left, as a movement, has had many successes and defeats over its long history. The Left achieved many successes during the 20th century – but also suffered many setbacks. Socialists, today, see the need to move beyond the defeats of the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2000s. In order to move forward the Left needs to have its own politics – the politics of the Left. This is vital – both for the Left today and for the future of the Left. The Left can only recover – and struggle for Socialism – when it moves beyond the limits of Neo-Liberalism. To do this the Left needs to understand its own politics – the politics of the Left.

Ultimately the Left is for Socialism. Specifically, Socialism, and Socialist politics, are the real basis of the Left – the politics of the Left. The Left, as a political and historical force, is a force which fights for Socialism. Socialism is a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. Socialism, as the struggle for human emancipation, has been one of the great ideologies of modern politics since the 1800s. Today, Socialism remains one of the main ideologies of modern politics. Socialism, today, remains the dominant ideology of the Left.

### **III. Socialism**

The Left is a political, social, and historical movement which struggles for Socialism. Indeed, Socialism, the idea, ideal, and hope of Socialism, is what defines the modern Left. It is the key goal of the Left. The struggle for Socialism is also the central form of politics for the Left – because the Left politically struggles for Socialism. In order to understand the Left, and its politics, you need to understand Socialism – as an idea, as an ideal, and as a movement. Socialism is about building a society of human freedom – a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. This means building a society based on freedom for every single person – for every man, every woman, every child, every nationality, every race, every sex, every gender, every class, and every person. Socialism, ideally, will be a society which will revolutionise human freedom, end the exploitation of humans by humans, end classes and class antagonisms, and develop the freedom for each and the freedom for all. In the end, Socialism is about humanism – e.g. human agency and human freedom. Socialism is

humanism – and humanism is Socialism. Socialism is human freedom. Socialism is about achieving human freedom. Socialism, in the end, is about achieving the free development of each and the free development of all. Socialism is the ideal of the Left. Indeed, Socialism is what the Left fights for – in real human terms The goal of achieving a society of human freedom, e.g. Socialism, is what motivates the Left – and defines it.

Every section of the Left, in political terms, is committed to achieving Socialism – about transforming modern society in order to achieve Socialism, a society of human freedom. This ideal is what unites all sections of the Left – regardless of politics, tendencies, or tradition. In order to be part of the Left, in real terms, you have to be for Socialism – for a society of universal human freedom.

## **IV. Left Politics**

The Left struggles for Socialism. This struggle is a political struggle. This means that the Left needs politics – Left politics. Left politics is the organised political struggle for Socialism. This means that politics, for the Left, is about developing, creating, and strengthening Left politics – politics for Socialism. The Left has always needed politics – in order to change the world and in order to struggle for a better world. This means that politics is vital for the Left – and central to the success of the Left. The Left cannot advance without politics, because politics is the only way to actively change the world. Politics is the only way that the Left can struggle to achieve a better world. Politics, in the end, is the means for achieving real social change. Politics, in the end, is the basis for serious social change in our society.<sup>3</sup>

The Left needs politics which can win today. This is because the Left has suffered countless defeats in the last half century – since the rise of Neo-Liberalism. The Left can no longer simply ignore the fact that the world is in crisis. It must solve this crisis. It can only solve this crisis through politics – through political struggle, through changing the world. In order to achieve this the Left needs politics which can win.<sup>4</sup>

In order to win the Left needs to understand the politics which resulted in defeat in the past – specifically Social Democracy and Stalinism. Social Democracy and Stalinism, in the end, both failed to maintain the struggle for Socialism. Today there is a vital need to return to the struggle for Revolutionary Socialism. The struggle needs to pick up where the struggle of the 20th century ended. We must continue the struggle until the victory