

Political Views and Ideas

Political Views and Ideas:

Studies in Modern Politics

By

R. G. Williams

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



Political Views and Ideas: Studies in Modern Politics

By R. G. Williams

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2022 by Rhys Glyn Williams

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-7976-X

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-7976-7

Long is the way and hard, that out of Hell leads up to light.
— John Milton

CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Note	xi
Chapter I.....	1
Modern Politics	
Chapter II.....	6
In Defence of Politics	
Chapter III	12
Political Views and Ideas	
Chapter IV	17
Our Times – Politics and Crisis	
Chapter V	32
Crisis and Modern Society	
Chapter VI	53
The Left and Politics	
Chapter VII.....	59
Freedom and Humanity	
Chapter VIII.....	63
Humanity against Barbarism	
Chapter IX	69
Imperialism Today	
Chapter X	75
A Green and Pleasant Land	
Chapter XI	79
Politics and Hope	

Chapter XII.....	82
Why Socialism	
Chapter XIII.....	118
Towards Socialism	
Chapter XIV	154
Socialism and Marxism: Humanism and Freedom	
Chapter XV.....	160
Socialism and Marxism: Theory and Politics	
Chapter XVI	166
The Radical Spirit	
Chapter XVII.....	170
Criticism and Politics	
Chapter XVIII.....	175
Socialism or Barbarism	
Bibliography	178

PREFACE

This book is a collection of essays on modern politics. It is a study of the politics of modern Capitalism and the need for Socialism. The title, 'Political Views and Ideas', refers to a key essay in the book. This book, as a collection of essays on political ideas, is an attempt to understand the crisis of our times – through examining the various crises and problems which define modern society.

This book, as a collection of essays, is an attempt to outline the crisis of contemporary society and its impact on contemporary politics. It is an attempt to understand the economic, social, political, and historical crisis of our times. The book is a Socialist study of modern politics.

Each of the essays in this book is about a particular political aspect of the contemporary problems of modern society – ranging from economic crisis to social crisis, from Imperialism to the environmental crisis, from war to revolution, from the crisis of Capitalism to the possibility of Socialism. The essays, together, attempt to outline a solid outline of the contemporary political problems of Capitalist society – from a Left perspective.

These essays, together, are united by a political commitment to Socialism. Socialism is the ideal of the free development of humanity – the free development of each and the free development of all. Specifically, the essays are about the need for Socialism in our times. This book is a Socialist study. It is a Socialist Humanist study, in the tradition of Democratic Socialism. The arguments of these essays, in the end, are for Socialism – Socialism as real human freedom.

Modern politics, today, requires a better form of politics. It requires a new politics – and a new Socialist politics. Modern politics needs Socialism. Humanity needs Socialism.

I believe humanity has the ability to achieve Socialism. I believe that if we struggle, collectively, for human freedom and human progress we shall achieve Socialism – a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all.

R.G. Williams

(2022)

NOTE

These essays were mostly written over a long period, from 2009 and from 2011. As a result, some aspects of the political analysis might be out of date – or overly optimistic. Despite this I have left these essays largely as they were first written – partly for political honesty. In the end the essays are ultimately arguments for a better world. It is still possible that we might achieve a better world – a Socialist world.

(2022)

CHAPTER I

MODERN POLITICS

This short essay is a study of modern politics. Since the end of the Cold War, and the crisis of 2008, modern politics has been in a state of crisis, change, and rapid development. Indeed, the overall development of politics has only become more and more shaped by crisis in the decade since 2008, especially in the Capitalist states. In this period of crisis and difficulty for modern politics we, on the Left, must look for new politics. We must look at the reality of modern politics and we must change modern politics. The only solution to the current problem of modern politics is to replace modern society with Socialism — with a politics based on the liberation of humanity. If the future is to be a Socialist future, we must find a way of achieving working-class politics — by overcoming the problems of modern politics.¹

The crisis of 2008 has changed modern politics. Much of the stability which shaped the politics of the Capitalist states of the 1990s and 2000s has collapsed with the reality of the crisis. This means that there are now dangers — but also opportunities — for the Left. The shift to the Right, since the crisis of 2008, points to the major dangers facing the Left today, while the reality of the crisis of 2008 also points to the major opportunities for the Left to struggle for a better world and for Socialism. The world, today, is facing so many crises that it is impossible to see which direction modern politics will go — either to the Left or to the Right. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 in modern politics it has been the Right which has dominated most politics, but the failure of the Right to solve the current crises of the world, today, suggests there are opportunities for the Left. Workers, across the world, are currently struggling again, on a level which we have not seen since the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the Neo-Liberal period. This means that the Left, while facing the threat of the Right, also has the opportunity, today, to push for its own politics — to push for Socialism.² The Left must struggle, through modern politics, to achieve Socialist politics.

Modern politics is defined by social struggle. Modern politics is defined by class struggle. Modern politics is the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism. Modern politics is the reality of the struggle between the capitalist class and the working class. Modern politics is the reality of the struggle of revolution and social revolution. Modern politics emerged, alongside modern society, with the development of the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution. This reality of modern politics, the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism, is a product of history, politics, economic development, social development, economic revolution, social revolution, and class struggle. Modern politics, since 1789, has produced a struggle which gives rise to the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism — a struggle which ensures the transition from Capitalism to Socialism. All of the major political developments in modern politics, since the rise of Capitalism, in the 1800s and the 1900s, have been based on the political struggle between the capitalist class and the working class. This reality of modern society, producing both modern politics and modern class struggle, is a reality of history and of historical development. Specifically, the development of all modern society has been the result of class and class struggle. The political struggle of the 20th century, and the current 21st century, is the political struggle for Socialism. In order to understand modern politics, we need the politics of Socialism and the ideas of Socialism. Marx, as one of the great thinkers of modern politics, showed that the main basis of politics is class struggle — emerging from the antagonism between classes and the struggle between classes. Marx showed that the historical, social, economic, and political reality of class and class struggle, alongside economic development, and social development, gives rise to modern politics and modern political struggle. In previous periods of history, the class struggle resulted in ancient society, feudal society, and capitalist society. For Marxists, the modern reality of modern politics is class struggle - specifically the struggle between the capitalist class and the working class. Indeed, if we look at most of modern politics, and most of modern history, we can see that Marx was correct when he said that the history of class society is the history of class struggle. In our times, modern politics is essentially the politics of the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism. Modern politics is the politics which is shaping the modern world today — in a period of crisis. These politics will determine the future of our times and the future of humanity. If we can understand the reality of modern politics, then the Left has a chance to fight for a better politics — a politics of Socialism. This need for better politics, emerging out of modern politics, is shown by the reality of our times — as a time of crisis. Modern politics, in the end,

will result either in Socialism or Barbarism.³ We must, as a human species, choose Socialism.

Modern politics is revolutionary politics. Indeed, revolution is a key part of modern politics. The modern reality of modern politics, since 1789, has produced the reality of revolution and social revolution as a major part of the progress and liberation of humanity. Indeed, revolution is the motor of history — the locomotive of history according to Marx — which pushes society forward in its development, due to the reality of class struggle. Indeed, modern politics first really emerged with the French Revolution of 1789.⁴ These economic struggles and political struggles give rise to modern political revolutions and modern social revolutions — such as bourgeois revolution and workers' revolution. Bourgeois revolution results in the development of Capitalism. Workers' revolution results in the development of Socialism. It is these two types of revolution which define modern politics and modern class struggle. The best examples of bourgeois revolution are the English Revolution, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution. The best examples of workers' revolution are the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution. Today the most revolutionary form of revolution is the working-class revolution — the workers' revolution to achieve Socialism. While Capitalism managed to hold back Socialism, during much of the 19th century and much of the 20th century, the political reality of our own times remains the struggle for Socialism. The modern reality of modern politics remains, quite clearly, in the early 21st century, based around the dynamic of class and class struggle — resulting in the need for the revolutionary transformation of society, from Capitalism to Socialism.

The political struggle, of our times, requires better solutions. We cannot go into the future by simply repeating the politics of Neo-Liberalism — which has dominated modern politics since the 1980s. Instead, we must find a way to transform modern politics and shift politics itself towards the Left and towards real social liberation. The politics of Socialism, specifically the politics of Socialist Humanism, remain the best form of politics for achieving this type of shift. Indeed, the politics of Socialism, and the politics of Socialist Humanism, are the only politics which can overcome the crisis. If we simply allow Capitalism to develop, as it has done, we shall find that the reality of the crisis since 2008 has produced nothing but barbarism. The reality of ecological decline, imperialism, the threat of the Far-Right, and the threat of war and barbarism, shows the need for better politics and better Left politics.⁵ Modern politics need to be transformed — from Capitalist politics into Socialist politics.⁶

Modern politics is dominated by crisis. It is quite clear that Capitalism has no solutions — to the crisis of today. We cannot know, exactly, if the politics of today, the politics of crisis, will lead to revolution or counter-revolution. Indeed, the politics of the crisis of the 1930s, after the Great Depression, led to the rise of the Right, and of Fascism, rather than the rise of the Left, and of Socialism. If the Left is to triumph, in the coming decades, it must really engage with the reality of crisis — specifically the reality that crisis can produce unpredictable and unintended results. We might be on the verge of a new generation of Left Revolutions and Socialist Revolutions — or we might be facing a new period of Right politics and Capitalist triumph. We might also be facing the reality of ecological collapse — if Capitalism is not overcome within the 21st century. Whatever happens, the Left, especially Socialists, must continue to struggle — both for humanity and for a better world. Unless we struggle, we will achieve nothing, and if we do not struggle the reality of the world will only be a reality of barbarism. We cannot accept a world of barbarism. We must achieve a world of Socialism.⁷

The politics of the Left are Socialist politics. The Left needs to be driven by the specific politics of Socialism. Socialism is about the emancipation of each and the emancipation of all — following on from the ideas of Marx and Engels.⁸ Socialism is about the free development of each and the free development of all. It is about the freedom and liberation of every man, every woman, every child, every nationality, every race, every sex, every gender, every class, and every person. We can only achieve Socialism via the economic, political, social, and intellectual struggle of the working class — the only class which can create Socialism and a better world.⁹ The specific reality of working-class politics has been the basis of every major advance by the Left in the last two centuries. Of course, the Left can make advances, here and there, based on other social forces, but the real basis for social progress, towards democracy, liberation, and Socialism, can only come from the workers. The struggle of modern politics, in the end, is the struggle to achieve the unity of the working class, in every society, and in every country, in order to achieve Socialism. This will require serious politics from the Left — politics which can overcome the crisis of modern politics.

Notes

1. P. Anderson, *Spectrum*, (2005)
2. P. Anderson, *Spectrum*, (2005)
3. R. Luxemburg, *The Crisis of German Social Democracy*, (1915)

4. E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848*, (1962)
5. N. Bobbio, *Left and Right*, (1996)
6. R. Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*, (1977)
7. E.P. Thompson, *Socialist Humanism*, (1957)
8. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (1848)
9. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (1848)

(2009)

CHAPTER II

IN DEFENCE OF POLITICS

This essay is about politics – specifically, a defence of politics. In society, today, we often dismiss politics. We often see politics as corrupt. We often see politics as simply bankrupt. People ignore politics. People believe that politics means nothing. This is a lie. Politics is useful. Politics is necessary. Politics is vital. The only way to actually change and improve the world is through politics. We cannot afford to ignore politics. We must engage with politics. We must engage with political struggle. In order to achieve a better society, we need politics. In order to achieve Socialism, we need politics.

Politics are important. Politics has always been important. Politics is part of modern society. Politics has always been part of society. Politics, in the end, is the only way to change society. Politics, in the end, is the only way to change society for the better. Indeed, it is through politics, and political struggle, that humanity might actually achieve a better society – a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all, a Socialist society. As a Socialist I believe in the power of politics to actually achieve Socialism. As a Socialist I believe that politics is the process for the majority of humanity to actually achieve a free, equal, and democratic society. Politics is also a mass activity. Politics should be the process by which the majority achieves social change – through democracy, struggle, and revolution. Politics belongs to all of humanity. Humanity needs to use politics in its struggle for real social change and real social revolution.

It is vital to engage with politics. The power of politics is shown by the fact that politics can change the world, in serious ways. Politics is powerful. It is the power of politics which makes politics important. As a Socialist, who is interested in a better world, I believe that no one can afford to ignore politics.

Politics are socially important. This is a simple social fact of modern times. Indeed, politics has always been important in changing society.

People who completely disregard politics, or the importance of politics, are people who seem to be ignoring the reality of our world. Politics is a crucial part of our world. Politics is a crucial part of our times. No one can afford to ignore politics.

People who ignore politics are ignoring the real world. Politics is clearly important. Politics is clearly powerful. Any serious engagement with politics shows its power and its ability to shape the world. Ignoring politics is useless as a plan to actually change the world. It is also dangerous. By ignoring politics, we risk leaving politics in the hands of those who would use politics for reactionary politics. If the Left ignores politics, it is effectively handing politics to the Right.

Politics is the activity of social struggle. Politics is the practical struggle between classes. It is the practical struggle to either keep the world as it is or to change it. All politics, including political activity, political ideas, and political struggle, is the process of social struggle. For Socialists, politics is the practical social process of achieving the real liberation of all. For Socialists, politics is the practical process of the struggle for a human society based on the free development of each and the free development of all.

Politics is vital. Politics is crucial. It is the only way in which ordinary people can struggle to change modern society for the better. Through the struggle for social revolution and political revolution, for democracy and for Socialism, politics is the means by which the working-class majority of humanity can achieve the freedom of humanity itself. Politics is therefore a crucial part of modern society – as the mechanism of achieving major social change through social revolution.

Modern politics began with the French Revolution. It began when the French Revolution created modern political ideas – specifically the Left and the Right. The Left works to change society – to make it more equal and democratic. The Right works to keep society as it is – to maintain existing classes and class society.

Modern politics, today, is the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism.

Modern politics, today, is the struggle between the Right and the Left.

Modern politics, today, is the struggle between the capitalist class and the working class.

The struggle between Capitalism and Socialism, between the Right and the Left, between the capitalist class and the working class, is what modern politics is.

To engage with politics is to engage with the real world. I ultimately believe that engaging with politics is one of the most practical ways of actually understanding our world. We can understand the world, in various ways, through economics, society, education, experience, etc., but we must understand the world in political terms – simply because of how important politics is to our world.

Politics is about changing the world. Politics is the only way in which the vast majority of society can actually change the world. All other forms of social struggle might be useful in changing the world, but it is only through direct political struggle, and the revolutionary struggle to transform society, that practical social change can be achieved. Throughout history the majority of any human society has only managed to achieve progress, such as democracy, through direct political struggle. It is only through struggling directly, in a political way, that the majority can achieve real social progress. Every major struggle for social progress, from democracy to Socialism, from the trade union movement to the suffragettes, from anti-slavery to anti-war, from peace to progress, has been a political struggle. Politics, therefore, is the crucial social mechanism for achieving social progress. Real social transformation, such as revolution, can only be achieved by practical political struggle. Revolution, as the ultimate form of social struggle and social transformation, is always a political act. Politics, therefore, is the ultimate form of struggle. Revolution is the ultimate form of social struggle.

Anyone who is interested in changing the world must be interested in politics. They have to be interested in using politics to change the world.

The best way to change the world is through social revolution. Revolution is a political act. Revolution is the ultimate political act. Revolution is the act of transforming society. As Marx said revolution is the revolutionary process of transformation of society. It is the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. It is the revolutionary reconstitution of society at large. Revolution is both social and political. Indeed, revolution is the ultimate combination of both social and political change.

Defending the use of politics is necessary. It is necessary because politics is important. If we, on the Left, are interested in a better society or a revolutionary society we cannot ignore politics. We must engage with

politics. We must engage with every type of politics which exists in modern society. We must engage with national politics, international politics, reformist politics, revolutionary politics, democratic politics, labour politics, trade-union politics, environmental politics, sexual politics, gender politics, and every other form of politics. We have to engage with politics as the first step towards achieving a changed society. Above all we have to engage with revolutionary politics. We have to engage with politics which is committed to the revolutionary transformation of society.

Politics is universal. Anyone can take part in politics. Indeed, everyone should take part in politics. I believe everyone has a right to engage with politics. I believe this is fundamental to living in a good society. Indeed, the struggle to be involved in politics has been a crucial part of working-class politics, from the rise of modern society to the present day. The working class has to be involved in politics, through independent working-class politics, if it is to achieve its own goals: a democratic and Socialist society.

In Britain, in particular, the struggle to be part of politics has been crucial to the development of workers' politics. From the time of the English Civil War to modern times, from the Chartists to the Suffragettes, from the Labour Party to the modern Left, being able to be involved in politics and political struggle has been a crucial part of British working-class politics. British workers have struggled for centuries to be part of politics. They have struggled to be part of modern politics. They have struggled to use politics to improve their society and the world. Politics is a vital and powerful tool for the British working class. Indeed, it has always been a crucial tool of the British working class – in the struggle for democracy and Socialism. Every British working-class movement, from the Levellers to the Chartists to the modern Socialist movement, has been a movement for working-class politics.

We can never ignore politics. This is because politics does not ignore us. While we might try to ignore politics and political developments, politics is still occurring in our world and in our society. Ignoring politics is useless as politics will always find a way to shape and direct our lives. If the working-class majority ignores politics the fact remains that politics will still affect the working-class majority. If the working class is interested in actually shaping the world around it, for its benefit and for the benefit of all of humanity, then the working class has to be involved in politics. This also applies to individuals too. Individuals can try to ignore politics, but politics will always affect the lives of individuals. As

individuals, and as members of the working class, we need to engage with politics. We cannot simply ignore politics. We must use politics to achieve real social change and real social progress – towards Socialism.

We must defend politics. We must struggle for politics. I see politics, and fighting for politics, as a crucial part of freedom. A society without politics is not a free society. A society in which there is little political debate is not a free society. In order to actually have a free society there must be politics. In order to actually have a Socialist society there needs to be political and democratic debate. Socialism, in many ways, is about bringing politics to everyone – so that everyone has a democratic say in the organising of society. Socialism, in political terms, is about making a democratic society.

People often say that politics is stupid. I have always hated that view of politics. It is an ignorant view. Simply because we might think politics is stupid does not make it stupid. Indeed, politics is simply too important to be ‘stupid’, regardless of how frustrating politics might be. It would be more stupid to ignore politics – given how important politics are to our world. Politics is often stupid, but politics is always important. We must not be stupid. We must engage with politics.

I think politics is too important to completely ignore. Even the most apolitical person must accept this. An apolitical person might try to ignore politics, but politics will eventually find them. There is also the fact that rejecting politics is itself a political position. In the end, I simply think that politics has to be engaged with – especially if we are to ever achieve a better world. These facts seem obvious to me. Hopefully, the importance of politics will seem obvious to others. In the end, the struggle for Socialism will have to be political. This is why we need politics.

Politics, today, is clearly about the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism. Politics, today, remains framed around the overall struggle between Capitalism and Socialism. This has been obvious, politically, since the 19th century – since the rise of modern society. If we are serious about politics then we have to engage with the serious fact that modern politics is about the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism, between the Right and the Left. Socialist politics is simple politics. For Socialists, the purpose of politics is to achieve Socialism – a society based on the free development of humanity. For Socialists, the activity of politics is the process of the working class struggling to achieve Socialism. All politics, today, for the Left, is the process of organising the working class so that it

can achieve its historical and political task: the achievement of international Socialism.

Politics is part of our society. If we wish to improve our society, we must engage in politics. By ignoring politics, we are ignoring any chance to improve our society. This is why I am for politics. I am for politics as it is the only way to achieve Socialism. Politics might be flawed, but politics are the only way to achieve any social struggle. Politics might be boring, but politics are crucial. Politics might be difficult, but they are vital. They are the only way to achieve a better future. This is why we must be politically involved. This is why we must be involved in politics.

(2012)

CHAPTER III

POLITICAL VIEWS AND IDEAS

This essay is about modern political ideas. In the modern world, modern politics has generated a number of different political ideas and movements. Ideas like Liberalism, Conservatism, Fascism, and Socialism are the dominant ideologies of our times – and have been since the development of modern society after the Industrial Revolution. There might be other types of politics but the main ideologies in the world remain Liberalism, Conservatism, Fascism, and Socialism. The struggle between these ideologies determines our society. The struggle between these ideologies determines our times.

Modern politics emerged with the development of the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution. These revolutions created modern society, and they also created modern politics. The modern political struggle of our times, between the Right and the Left, between Capitalism and Socialism, between the capitalist class and the working class, has its origins in the revolutions of the 1800s and the 1900s. Ever since then modern politics has ultimately been about the political struggles between the main ideologies created in the 19th century and the 20th century: Liberalism, Conservatism, Fascism, and Socialism. Of course, modern politics has changed a great deal since the French Revolution of 1789, or even since the Russian Revolution of 1917, but the fact remains that modern politics is ultimately about the struggle between these four main ideologies – especially in the form of the struggle between the capitalist class and the working class. As long as modern industrial society continues to exist in some form the main struggle of modern politics will probably be between Capitalism and Socialism. Liberalism, Conservatism, and Fascism, in the end, are all various forms of Capitalist society. Socialism, in the end, is a possible alternative to Capitalist society – based on the idea of the free development of each and the free development of all. People might argue and dismiss these ideas, or even my outline of modern politics, but the fact remains that the modern political struggle, even today, in the early 21st century, remains the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism. Modern politics remains a social struggle,

between Capitalism and Socialism.

In this short essay I want to make the argument that in modern politics you have to decide between one of the four major political ideologies. Liberalism, Conservatism, Fascism, and Socialism are the main politics of our times. Liberalism, Conservatism, and Fascism, in various forms, are the ideologies of the Right. Socialism, in various forms, is the ideology of the Left. In order to be really political, you have to decide between them. I believe that these ideologies are our political options.

Modern politics, today, is simply the social struggle between the ruling class and the working class. It is simply the struggle to maintain existing society or to overthrow existing society. If you believe in maintaining existing society, you are on the Right. If you believe in changing existing society, you are on the Left.

For me, the ultimate choice in politics is the choice between class society and Socialism. We all have to make this choice in terms of our politics. In modern politics, you have to make a choice: either Totalitarianism (e.g. Capitalism, Imperialism, Stalinism, Fascism, etc.) or Socialism.

You cannot ignore these forms of politics. Politics, in the end, as the practical struggle between classes, eventually forces you to pick an ideology. Even the most apolitical person, in the end, has to pick a political side – during a time of crisis.

I am a Socialist. Specifically, I am a Socialist, a Socialist Humanist, a Democratic Socialist, and a Marxist. This shapes my views about politics and about other political ideologies. I think that having a political perspective about politics is vital for actually understanding political ideas. My ideas, as a Socialist, shapes how I think about politics. This essay, in the end, is my own personal outlook on the politics of our time – and its ideas.

I think having political ideas, or at least a political ideology, today, is crucial. Everyone has politics. Everyone should be clear about their politics. It is clear, despite arguments that we live in a post-ideological world, that we are living in a world of politics and political struggle. It is clear that all types of politics are currently shaping the world today – especially through political and social struggle. It is clear that the working class and the capitalist class are struggling with each other today – in a class struggle. It is clear that the Left, the Centre, and the Right are struggling with each other today – in a struggle for today and for

tomorrow. If we are serious about understanding our times, and the struggles of our times, it is vital that we understand the politics of our times. The main political ideologies of our times – Liberalism, Conservatism, Fascism, and Socialism – remain the dominant politics of our times. Our political options, today, and for the future, remain based on these ideologies. If we want a good and better future, it is crucial to understand the politics of our times.

Modern politics, today, is divided between the Right and the Left. The Right, today, wants to maintain existing society – by maintaining existing Capitalist society. The Left, today, wants to change existing society – by transforming society into a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all, e.g. Socialism. The Right wishes to maintain the hierarchies of existing class society. The Left wishes to abolish the hierarchies of existing class society. The politics of the Right, in various forms, are the politics of Liberalism, Conservatism, and Fascism. The politics of the Left, in various forms, are the politics of Socialism.

Politics, today, demands that we pick a side. We cannot simply remain apolitical or in the ‘Centre’. It is clear that the crisis of our times, specifically the crisis of Capitalism, demands that we pick a side. Either we are for maintaining Capitalist society or we are for overthrowing it and replacing it. Either we are for Totalitarianism, or we are for Democratic Socialism. The reality of politics, today, and the reality of real social struggle, shows that no one can afford to be neutral anymore. Indeed, no one has ever managed to get through life by being ‘neutral’. At some point or other we all have to make a political decision of where we stand on the political issues of our times. This eventually pulls us to the Right or the Left. If you believe that existing society should be maintained, despite its exploitation and its oppression of the majority, then you are on the Right. If you believe that existing society should be changed, because of its exploitation and oppression of the majority, you are on the Left. If you believe in maintaining a hierarchical and class-based society, you are on the Right. If you believe in building a free and classless society, you are on the Left. If you believe in Capitalism, you are on the Right. If you believe in Socialism, you are on the Left. Once you answer that fundamental question, about whether you support the continuation or changing of existing Capitalist society, your political position, on the Right or on the Left, has been chosen. After you make that choice, your only option is to struggle to ensure that your politics win in the great social struggle of our times. You have to make your choice: either Totalitarianism (e.g.

Capitalism, Imperialism, Stalinism, Fascism) or Socialism. Politics, in the end, is simply the practical struggle of social classes – either to maintain class society or to overthrow it. Politics, in the end, is simply the struggle for a better society.

We all have to make our choice. We all have to decide which side we are on. We all have to decide how we can best struggle to achieve our politics. It is always best if you make your choice about politics and stick with it. No one likes a traitor or a renegade. I made my own choice, about politics, as a young man – and I have stayed with my political choice. I am determined to remain a Socialist and to remain part of the Left. No matter what happens in my life I shall never give up on Socialism and the politics of the Left. For me, Socialism is a complete and utter commitment. For me, Socialism is simply the struggle for a better and free humanity. For me, Socialism is simply the commitment to being a decent human being. For me, Socialism is simply the process of creating a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. For me, Socialism is human freedom. If I gave up on my politics, for whatever reason, I would be a traitor to myself. I cannot imagine any social, political, or historical argument that could undermine my commitment to Socialism – specifically Democratic Socialism, the Socialism of Marx. If I gave up on my politics, my life would be an empty shell – populated by someone who did not have the courage to remain committed to politics. I made my political choice, and I shall stick with it – regardless of anything. My political options are simply the options of trying to do my best in order to achieve Socialism.

I hope that my outline of the politics of our times is correct and clear. Of course, I want my outline to be correct, but I also want it to be clear. I believe it is crucial to have a clear and accurate outline of politics – because politics is vital for our society. If we wish to improve our society, we must understand politics. If we, on the Left, wish to achieve a better society we must understand politics. If we want a Socialist society, based on the principle of the free development of each and the free development of all, we must understand politics.

We all have to make a political decision about our politics. It is impossible to be neutral, forever, about politics. In the end we all have to decide what our politics are – based on our principles, our values, and our interests. I believe Socialism is the best form of politics – because it seeks to build a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. I believe Liberalism and Conservatism are useless

right-wing politics – politics which offer no solution to the problems of our times. I believe Fascism is just simply Barbarism – the worst form of class society, the worst form of Capitalism. I have made my own political choice: I choose Socialism. Other people will have to make their own political choices, especially as politics increasingly becomes defined by the crisis of our times. In the end, everyone has to choose their political option.

I think it is important to understand the politics of our times. I think politics are important. I know politics are important. Politics are vital for actually changing the world – for making the world a better place. I think it is important to have good and solid politics. My politics were shaped by the crisis of Capitalism in 2007/2008. My politics are Socialist politics. Other people might have other politics. Of course, they might have similar or different politics to me – even violently different politics to me. The point is that everyone has politics, in one form or another. Even the most apolitical person has some sort of politics – usually soft-Left or soft-Right politics. My point is that everyone has politics, and everyone has political options about their politics. They can choose to go to the Left, towards Socialism, or they can choose to go to the Right, towards Liberalism, Conservatism, and Fascism. People might dislike politics, but the fact remains that most people have politics. Most people have some form of politics – based on their personalities, their background, their lives, their classes, and their hopes and dreams for the future. I hope most people will move towards the Left – towards politics based on human freedom and solidarity – but I recognise that politics is ultimately about social struggle. The fact remains that we all have politics. Politics might change in the future, but our options remain Liberalism, Conservatism, Fascism, or Socialism. I hope, for the sake of humanity, that people choose Socialism.

(2014)

CHAPTER IV

OUR TIMES – POLITICS AND CRISIS

I.

This essay is about our times. In this essay I want to outline a personal view of our times – a personal and Socialist view of our times. Our times, today, are the early decades of the 21st century. Our times, effectively, are the times which have developed since 1989, 1991, 2001, 2003, and 2008 – since the end of the Cold War, the Afghan War, the Iraq War, and the crisis of 2008. I believe our times are a time of crisis.

Our times, since the end of the Cold War and the crisis of 2008, have been a time of continuing and developing crisis. Indeed, we have been living with crisis for a very long time at this point in human history – since the beginning of the 21st century. When we look at our times, today, with its economic and social crisis, I think we can understand the people of the 1930s or 1960s who also lived in a time of crisis. They lived in a time of crisis. We are living in a time of crisis.

I have been aware of the crisis of our times for a very long time. Indeed, I think most people alive today can recognise that we are living in a time of crisis. The economic, social, political, intellectual, and environmental crises of our times show that we are living in a time of crisis. It is impossible, today, to deny that we are living in a time of crisis. What is at stake, today, is recognising the crisis of our times and recognising the struggle of our times.

I believe that the only way to solve the crisis of our times is through replacing our society with a new, better, society. I believe we need to replace Capitalist society with a Socialist society. I believe we need to establish Socialism – a society based on the principle of the free development of each and the free development of all. I believe that Socialism, a Humanist Socialism, is the only way to solve the economic, social, political, intellectual, and environmental crises of our times. I believe Socialism is the only way to end the exploitation and oppression

which dominates our society. This is obvious. This is why Socialism is the only effective radical politics in our times.

Our times are a time of crisis. This has been obvious for a very long period of time – especially since the economic crisis of 2008. Indeed, the economic crisis of 2008 showed that we are living in a much wider period of social crisis. The near collapse of global Capitalism, into its worst crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s, shows completely that our times are a time of crisis. With the economic crisis has come other forms of crisis since 2008 – economic crisis, social crisis, political crisis, etc. The crisis of our times is a large crisis. It is a general crisis of our society. It is a general crisis of Capitalism. It is a general crisis of Capitalist society. It is a general crisis of global Capitalist society. It is a crisis of economics, politics, society, intellectual development, and the environment. The crisis is also a historical crisis – perhaps the worst crisis in the history of Capitalist society. The history of crisis also suggests that our times are times of serious crisis – simply because the crisis of our times is occurring in a period of vast globalisation, since the end of the Cold War. When we think of our times in historical terms, and the crisis of our times in historical terms, we can see how serious the crisis really is. Indeed, our times, themselves, seem to be a complete time of crisis which can be compared to other periods of crisis in history - such as the crisis of the 3rd century, the crisis of the 14th century, the crisis of the 17th century, and the crisis of the 20th century. Every major power is being shaped by crisis, today. Every country, in the world, is being shaped by crisis. Every society is being shaped by crisis. Every class is being shaped by crisis. Every social movement, today, is being shaped by crisis. Every social struggle, today, is being shaped by crisis. It is simply obvious to suggest that every aspect of modern society, today, is being shaped by crisis. Our times are times of complete crisis – of ‘general crisis’. It is a crisis which is affecting every part of modern society – e.g. every part of modern Capitalist society. It is a crisis which has many forms, but it is ultimately one large, complete, crisis – the crisis of Capitalism. The crisis has many aspects, such as economic crisis, social crisis, political crisis, intellectual crisis, and environmental crisis, but it is ultimately one crisis – the crisis of Capitalism.

In social terms, the reality of crisis, today, is reshaping society – as every society, class, and individual knows. In political terms, the reality of crisis, today, is also obvious – as every political movement, party, and struggle has had to react to the reality of crisis. The whole social atmosphere of our times is riddled with crisis – as people can see the economic problems, the