

Studies of Left-Wing Ideas

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By

R. G. Williams

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Socialism is the expression of man's need for his fellow men,
his undivided social being, and hence it must find expression in love.
—E.P. Thompson

CONTENTS

Preface	viii
Chapter I	1
Humanity Today	
Chapter II	13
Marxism and Humanism	
Chapter III	27
Socialism: A Marxist Study	
Chapter IV	35
Socialist Humanism: A Marxist Study	
Chapter V	81
Left Democracy: A Marxist Study	
Chapter VI	127
Hopes of Revolution: A Marxist Study of Revolutionary Socialism in the Twentieth Century	
Chapter VII	154
Modern Struggles for Socialism	
Bibliography	167

PREFACE

This book is a study of radical ideas. Specifically, it is a short study of Socialism and Socialist Humanism. It is an argument for Socialism. This book is a collection of essays about radical ideas – specifically the radical idea of Socialism. The world, today, is clearly a world which is being driven by crisis and by despair — specifically by the crisis of Capitalism. The crisis of Capitalism has produced other crises within human society today, specifically the crisis of humanity, the crisis of economics, the crisis of politics, the crisis of society, the crisis of history, the crisis of ecology, and the threat of Imperialism, Fascism, and Barbarism. This reality means that in order for humanity to achieve further progress, at this time in history and in politics, it is necessary for humanity to engage, critically, with the reality of the world — specifically the reality of the crisis of Capitalism and the necessity of Socialism.

The world today is a Capitalist world. This means that in order to really engage with the reality of the crisis facing humanity today we must engage with the reality of Capitalism. In order to engage with the reality of Capitalism we must seek to replace Capitalism with Socialism.

Socialism is the ideal of a society based on human freedom, for each person and for every person. Socialism, in the end, is the struggle for the emancipation of the working class, to achieve the emancipation of humanity and all of society. The freedom of humanity, today, will only be possible if we achieve Socialism — in the form of Socialist Humanism and the creation of a Socialist Humanist world. The argument of this book is based on supporting the ultimate goal of Socialism — the radical objective of a free, equal, democratic, and socialist, society based on the abolition of class. The ideal of Socialism is a society based on the emancipation of humanity. Socialism, as Marx said, is about the positive achievement of human liberation — Socialism is Humanism, and Humanism is Socialism. Socialism, as the positive abolition of class and class society, is the positive liberation of humanity. The ultimate objective of Socialism, in the end, is the freedom of humanity.

The argument of this book is simple: Capitalism must be replaced by Socialism, and inhumanity must be replaced with Humanism. Given the

political development of humanity, since the end of the 20th century, the reality of the need for Socialism has only increased — as shown by the reality of the crisis of Capitalism, its economic, social, political, historical, and ecological problems, and its Imperialism and Barbarism.

The essays in this book are intended as a basic Socialist analysis of Socialist ideas — outlining the need for Socialism and Humanism in the world today. The individual essays cover Socialism, Socialist Humanism, Democracy, Marxism, Marxist Humanism, the revolutionary struggle for Socialism in the 20th century, and the reality of humanity today. The task, for any Socialist today, is to understand the basic reality of the world, so that we might change that world into a Socialist world.

This book is a Socialist study. It is a Socialist Humanist study, in the tradition of Democratic Socialism. This book is a brief argument for both Socialism and Humanism. It is, therefore, a work of politics. It is a work of political theory. In the world, today, it is impossible to be neutral on the question of humanity's struggle for a better world, due to the reality of the world today. This book is, therefore, about discussing the most important issue facing the world today — the choice between Socialism and Barbarism. This book is an attempt to argue for the necessity of Socialism.

R.G. Williams

(2022)

CHAPTER I

HUMANITY TODAY

This short essay is a study of humanity and the world today. Humanity, today, is in the middle of a major crisis. This major crisis is the crisis of Capitalism. This crisis can only be solved by engaging, critically, with the reality of the crisis itself. We can no longer afford to ignore the crisis. We must engage with the reality of the crisis — and work, together, to overcome it. This means both interpreting the world and changing the world. This means having a revolutionary analysis of the world which can change the world itself. This means having a concrete analysis of Capitalism and a concrete politics of Socialism. Indeed, the only way to solve the crisis of today is through Socialism — a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. The world, today, is being shaped by the crisis of Capitalism — specifically the crisis which emerged in 2008. This crisis is the basis by which we must understand the economic, political, historical, social, and intellectual development of humanity today — at least in serious terms. The crisis of 2008 is the basis of the serious crisis of Capitalism itself today. This crisis of Capitalism is producing the real material basis of the world today. The world, today, can be seen in two different ways. Either we see the reality of the crisis — or we ignore it. This reality is shaping the politics of the two major classes in the world today — the capitalist class and the working class. It is clear that the capitalist class, for its own reasons, is determined to ignore the crisis. The working class is the only class which can effectively see the crisis. The working class is the only class which can solve the crisis. This is why the working class is a revolutionary class. This means that the working class is the only class which can really engage with the reality of the crisis of humanity today. Humanity, today, has a simple choice: either Socialism or Barbarism.

If we look at the world, today, we can see that humanity is facing a reality of crisis. This crisis is clearly the crisis of Capitalism. This crisis is the crisis that we must face today if we truly wish to achieve a better world for all of humanity. The reality of Capitalism, a system based on exploitation, oppression, and profit, has produced the basis of the crisis of our times. The

crisis of economics, politics, society, ecology and the threat of Imperialism, Fascism, war, nuclear war, and environmental disaster, threatens to severely undermine human civilisation during the 21st century. This threat today is the overall crisis of Capitalism. The crisis today is clearly a Capitalist crisis — if we look at the reality and evidence of today. Every piece of legitimate evidence and analysis shows that Capitalism, itself, is responsible for the crisis of our times and the crisis of our society. No rational thinking human being, when presented with the evidence of our times, can deny that Capitalism is in crisis — and that Capitalism is responsible for the crisis of our times. Essentially the crisis of Capitalism is the fact of our times. The crisis of Capitalism is producing the barbarism of our times. Barbarism is inhumanity. We must engage with these facts if we seek to improve the chances for a better world. We must accept these facts. We can never deny these facts. We must face facts. We must face facts if we truly wish to engage with reality — and face reality. The fact of the crisis of Capitalism shows the need for Socialism — for a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all.¹

The crisis, today, is a product of Capitalist society. This means that the crisis is an economic crisis, a political crisis, a social crisis, and a historical crisis. We are all obviously aware of the crisis — especially since the crisis of 2008. This reality of crisis is a key part of Capitalism itself. Indeed, any serious study of Capitalism will show that Capitalism inevitably creates crisis. Capitalism always produces crises and problems within itself. The crisis today is simply another phase in the wider crisis of Capitalism, a crisis which has been developing, in multiple ways and multiple stages since the rise of Capitalism itself after the Industrial Revolution.

The reality of the crisis has produced a need to understand the reality of humanity today.² The crisis tells us two facts about modern humanity and modern society. The first fact is that modern Capitalism is, slowly but surely, undermining the human race.³ The second fact is that modern Capitalism, today, must be replaced by Socialism — if humanity is to have a good and better future, a humanist future.⁴

Humanity today, so far, has failed to really address the reality of the crisis. The crisis can only be solved if we engage, seriously, with the reality of the crisis. A key task for humanity, today, is to understand the reality and nature of the crisis of Capitalism — in order to work, effectively, for a better, Socialist, future. This is why it is crucial for humanity to engage with the reality of the crisis today — so that it can struggle for Socialism.

Humanity, today, is divided by class. Capitalism, itself, is a class society, built on the reality of class, exploitation, and oppression. It is the class-based reality of human society which has created the crisis — and which prevents humanity from overcoming the crisis. Class, as a reality of a class-based society, maintains the exploitation and oppression of the overwhelming majority of the human race. The division of humanity, into classes, specifically the capitalist class and the working class, is an obvious reason for why humanity is in crisis today — because a society based on class cannot overcome the problems which are caused by class. The only way that humanity can overcome its problems, today and in the future, is through the positive abolition of class and class society — through the direct emancipation of the working class. This basic fact is clear if we look at any serious struggle for a better world today. Class is the clear cause of the crisis. Class is the clear result of the crisis. If the crisis is to be solved humanity must seek to overcome class itself — by abolishing Capitalism and by achieving Socialism. Socialism, in real terms, is the solution to the crisis of class society.

Humanity is a product of history and human activity. The world we see today is clearly the result of history and human activity. Today, in the modern world, we live in a Capitalist society. Since the creation of modern society, through the Industrial Revolution, humanity has been able to utterly transform and re-define itself, through a series of economic, political, and social revolutions. The rise of Capitalism and the rise of industrial society has clearly produced great results for humanity — producing the means by which we can create a better society. Unfortunately, today, humanity remains divided by the reality of Capitalism itself. Capitalism, through human labour, has produced a revolution in human society, but it remains a system based on exploitation, oppression, and class. Modern society has created modern civilisation, but it has also created forms of barbarism. The history of Capitalism shows that it can create social revolution — but it can also create conflict, exploitation, oppression, misery, and war. Indeed, Capitalism, when left to its own devices, in the end, always produces Barbarism. Barbarism is the regression of humanity — the regression to the worst forms of exploitation and oppression. The fact that Capitalism produces Barbarism is shown by the history and reality of Capitalism itself — if we look at the history of accumulation, empire, war, counter-revolution, Fascism, Nazism, and the world wars of the 20th century. This reality of economic development, alongside social problems, is the reality of the world today. It is a reality which ultimately shapes the political choices and political changes facing humanity today. The ultimate political and social choice facing humanity today is either to continue on with Capitalism, and risk the further decline

of humanity, due to exploitation, oppression, and ecological and social disaster, or to move beyond Capitalism, towards Socialism. Rosa Luxemburg, the great German Socialist, in 1915, wrote that the choice facing humanity, in the future, is the choice of Socialism or Barbarism. Either we shall regress to Barbarism, and suffer the worst parts of human nature, or we shall advance towards Socialism, and liberate the best parts of human nature. This is why the main choice facing humanity, today, is the choice of Socialism or Barbarism. Either we shall advance, as a species, towards Socialism or we shall continue to decline into the reality of Barbarism. Barbarism, in Marxist terms, is a society based completely on the worst sort of reactionary oppression and exploitation — a society based on the worst sort of reaction. As Luxemburg, herself, wrote in 1915, during the middle of the First World War: 'Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to Socialism or regression into Barbarism'.⁵ Luxemburg remains correct. The choice facing humanity today is a simple choice — the choice of Socialism or Barbarism. There is no other alternative but this choice, given the history and politics of the world today as it exists under Capitalism. If we are serious about the future of humanity, then we must choose Socialism.

The problems of Capitalist society, today, demand solutions. The real economic, social, political, intellectual, and environmental problems of Capitalism show that Capitalism cannot solve the basic problems which it has created.⁶ This makes the struggle for Socialism necessary. This makes the struggle for Socialism vital.

The Capitalist world is built on a reality of exploitation. The working class, who are the majority of society, are clearly exploited by Capitalism. This reality of exploitation means that the majority of human society is built on top of an unjust and unacceptable social foundation. It is unacceptable, given the vast productive power of humanity, that the economic and social basis of our society is based on exploitation. This reality means that Socialism is not only an economic and political argument against Capitalism, it is a humanist argument against Capitalism. The root basis of Capitalism, based on exploitation, means that Capitalism is incapable of building a humanistic world in the long run. This reality reinforces the basic humanistic principles of Socialism — namely that human emancipation, through Socialism, will achieve a society based on real human freedom. A society based on exploitation, such as Capitalism, cannot call itself a human society, in terms of real humanistic values. It is this fundamental reality of Capitalism that means that it must be opposed at every level and every stage in order to build a better world. The economic reality of exploitation is the social basis

for all oppression in the world today. By overcoming exploitation, by abolishing Capitalism, we might yet achieve the means to overcome the problems of humanity. This means that the only hope for a humanistic society, a human society based on free and equal human beings, is only possible through Socialism.

The Capitalist world is built on a reality of oppression. We can see this reality of oppression all around us. Indeed, it almost seems as if the whole world, today, is built on the reality of oppression — given the advances of the Right since the 1970s and 1980s. We can see the real oppression of workers, people, men, women, children, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, racial groups, religious groups, and even entire states and nations. The oppression of people, in all forms, is a stain on our humanity, and on our human civilisation. Indeed, it is a disgrace which undermines the entirety of our humanity. The belief that we do not live in a world built on top of oppression is impossible to maintain — given the obvious evidence of this reality of oppression. Indeed, the serious reality of oppression, in the world today, is so great that denial of it is essentially the same as denying the reality of Capitalism itself. If we are serious about achieving a better world, and a better humanity, then we must confront the reality of oppression, and work to abolish the basis for that oppression — which exists at the very heart of the social reality of Capitalism itself. Human beings are capable of solidarity and co-operation. This means that the social basis of Capitalism, based on hierarchy and oppression, can be opposed by the serious struggle for social emancipation, in the form of Socialism and Socialist Humanism. If we truly believe in the idea of humanity, then we cannot accept the reality of any oppression of human beings. This principle is crucial to any real humanistic politics — such as Socialism. A real advance, for humanity, would be the advance of overcoming oppression — in all its forms. We must always be driven by the basic politics of solidarity in overcoming oppression today. This is summed up by the principle: ‘the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all’. It is summed up by the principle: ‘love your neighbour as yourself’. This is also summed up by the principle: ‘an injury to one is an injury to all’. As Che Guevara, the great Argentine revolutionary, once said: ‘the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love ... love of living humanity’. Freedom, love, solidarity, and humanity are the basis of human progress. These principles, and these ideas, are the real basis for a better society.

The reality of Capitalism, as a system which generates crisis, is shown in the reality of the world as we all see it today. The crisis of Capitalist production, in the form of economic crisis, and ecological disaster,

highlights a key fact facing humanity today. This fact is that either we seek to change the way in which we produce and maintain our society — or our society will be destroyed by the reality of overproduction, crisis, and ecological disaster. The fact that Capitalism also produces Imperialism, conflict, war, and the possibility of Fascism and nuclear war, is a further threat to humanity. The Capitalist system cannot solve these problems itself. This reinforces the need for Socialism, both in ecological terms and human terms. This reality pushes us towards the realisation that we must replace Capitalism with Socialism.

Humanity has the means to overcome the problems of the world today. Humanity is a species which can labour and change the world through its labour. This has been the power and reality of humanity ever since the human species emerged from the process of evolution, social evolution, and social struggle. This power has allowed humanity to create the world of today — with both its positives and its negatives. This reality, of human labour, means that humanity has the means to both interpret the world and to change the world. This power, unique among species on our planet, is the real basis for achieving social progress. This progress needs to be directed towards human liberation — rather than human exploitation. This progress also has to be directed towards creating a world in which human development is sustainable with the world and the environment of the world. Humanity has the means to achieve this. The only thing which prevents humanity from achieving this is the reality of class, exploitation, and oppression. By abolishing class, exploitation, and oppression, humanity will not only liberate itself — it will achieve the liberation of the world.

Can humanity overcome the crisis of today? The next century will be crucial in answering this crucial question. Indeed, it is likely that the next century will be based on the social struggle to answer this question. There is no real reason why humanity cannot solve the problems which face us. Humanity has the intelligence and the ability to solve its crises. The problem is that we live in a Capitalist society which seeks to prevent human progress, in order to profit from the exploitation and oppression of the working-class majority of humanity. If humanity is to solve its problems, and its crises, humanity must seek to overcome Capitalism itself. The only solution to Capitalism, and to the crisis of humanity, today, is Socialism. This fact is clear if we clearly look at the reality of the world today, and the reality of our times. We must struggle to overcome the crisis of today. The only way to struggle is to struggle for Socialism. How much humanity succeeds in the coming century will be determined by how closely we can reach Socialism — a society based on the free development of each and the free development

of all. This task, the task of building Socialism, will be the task of overcoming our crisis. It is the key task of our times — the task of building Socialism.⁷ If we can achieve this task then we will have developed the means to really engage with the problems facing humanity — and we will have developed the means to solve those problems.

The future for humanity will hopefully be Socialism. The future for humanity will be Socialism. This statement might seem overly confident, given the developments of Capitalism since the end of the Cold War, but it is a statement backed up by social reality. It is clear that Capitalism cannot solve humanity's problems. It is clear, also, that Capitalism is in crisis. This means that Socialism is possible. This means that the prospects for Socialism, today and in the future, are good. Humanity can achieve the struggle for Socialism — because it has both the ability and the potential to build Socialism.

If humanity is to overcome the crisis of today it must have a solution. The solution to the crisis is Socialism — a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. The only political movement which can solve the problems of the world, today, is Socialism. Specifically, Socialism is the only social and political movement which has the potential to solve the world's problems today — in the form of Socialist Humanism. Socialism is about placing ordinary people in charge of society, through the democratic control of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Socialism is about liberating each and every human being — every man, every woman, every child, every nationality, every race, every sex, every gender, every class, and every person. Socialist Humanism is about placing all men and all women at the centre of the real liberation of ordinary people. Socialist Humanism is about achieving Socialism in real human terms — and about avoiding the betrayals of Socialism which occurred in the 20th century (e.g. Stalinism) by ensuring that the real basis for Socialism is real people. Indeed, Socialist Humanism, in political terms, can be summed up as: “real men and women at the centre of socialist theory and aspiration”.⁸ Socialist Humanism is about Socialism through working-class liberation — rather than Socialism through a dictatorial party. Socialism, e.g. real Socialist Humanism, is the only social force which has both the means and the potential to overcome the crisis of humanity today. Socialist Humanism can do this because it is based on the real struggle of men and women.⁹

The reality of humanity, today, means that we must engage, seriously, with the task of creating Socialism and building Socialism. Given the reality of humanity today, with all its problems, this point is no longer just a political

opinion — it is a political necessity. All human beings in the world, today, have a simple choice: either struggle for Socialism or be destroyed by the crisis of Capitalism. This choice, the choice of Socialism or Barbarism, is the only political and social choice which really matters in the world today. Everything else is irrelevant — when compared to the necessity of Socialism.

In order to achieve Socialism, we must develop a politics of Socialism — a politics of achieving the liberation of humanity. This means developing a politics of Socialism which is firmly based on Socialist Humanism. The only class, today, which can achieve both Socialism and Socialist Humanism is the working class — the class who labour to create modern society.

The working class can solve the problems of our times. The only class of people who can both recognise the crisis and solve the crisis is the working class. The working class, because it is the class which produces, labours, works, and builds, in modern society, is the only class with the real potential to change the world for the better. The working class has the real power, today, to both recognise the crisis and to solve the crisis — by its political struggle for Socialism. If there is any hope for the world today, as Orwell said, it lies with the workers.¹⁰

If the working class struggles, for itself and for humanity, it has the potential to achieve the liberation of all of humanity. This is because the working class has no interest in maintaining exploitation or oppression. This fact means the working class can build Socialism. This fact means the working class has the social power to solve the crisis of today. Indeed, the only real chance to solve the crisis of today rests with the power of the working class.

Humanity has the potential to change itself. Indeed, humanity is a revolutionary species, as shown by our history, and the constant revolutions in human history. This is why humanity is capable of revolution. It is the labour and work of humanity, to free itself, which has produced the revolutionary potential of humanity, both in the past and in the present. This permanent ability to produce revolution allows humanity to produce a permanent revolution — a permanent revolution to achieve the emancipation of all of humanity. Permanent revolution, today, following the ideas of Marx and Trotsky, is the process of the working class, achieving its own independent revolution: to achieve both democratic revolution and Socialist revolution.

Humanity can only achieve Socialism through revolution — through overthrowing Capitalism. Revolution is the process of the revolutionary

transformation of society. Revolution is the only solution — both to the crisis and the reality of Capitalism. It is only through the process of revolution, specifically Socialist Revolution, that we can hope to overcome the crisis of the world today. The history of the last century shows that the Capitalist system cannot be reformed into a better system. The only solution to our crisis, today, is the revolutionary struggle for Socialism. This reality, as a fact of politics and society, ensures that revolutionary politics is the basis for real, and serious, politics today. Just as Marx and Lenin showed, in the 1800s and 1900s, the struggle for the emancipation of humanity can only be achieved by revolutionary struggle.

The struggle for Socialism must be understood as a struggle against Capitalism. It is clear that in the world today the primary antagonism within human society is the antagonism of Capitalism itself — its production, its problems, its crises, its exploitation and oppression of workers, its antagonism and class conflict between the capitalist class and the working class. In order to fully face and overcome the crisis we must seek to overcome Capitalism — by struggling, directly, for Socialism. This means that the struggle, against Capitalism and for Socialism, is a total struggle. It also means that it is a revolutionary struggle. The liberation of humanity cannot be achieved by reformist means — we cannot reform Capitalism into Socialism. In order to struggle and achieve Socialism we must achieve it by revolution and by revolutionary struggle. This fact is a key historical and political fact, given the results of the last two centuries, but it is also a fact of our times. If we are serious about changing the world, for the better, then the only way we can achieve it is via revolutionary Socialism — by achieving Socialism by revolution.

The struggle for Socialism in recent times, since the 20th century, has fallen on hard times. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the fall of Stalinism have left their marks, both positive and negative, upon the struggle for Socialism. Our struggle for Socialism, today, in the early 21st century, exists within this history and within this historical reality. It also exists within a political reality — the reality of the class struggle under Capitalism. Indeed, it also exists within this political reality. The struggle for Socialism, today, is shaped by the past — but it is also being made and remade in the present. Clearly, we are facing difficult times for Socialism, since the rise of Neo-Liberalism, but we must also remember that Socialism has been in difficult times before — during its past. Our struggle for Socialism might be faced with historical difficulties and political difficulties — but we should remember that we have struggled before. Socialism, facing the terrible struggles of the 19th century and of the 20th

century, managed to continue the struggle — against Capitalism, against Fascism, against Nazism, against Stalinism, against Neo-Liberalism, and for Socialism. This reality, of advance and retreat, should be clear to all of us who call ourselves Socialists. The commitment to solidarity is the basis of Socialist Hope and Socialist Humanity.

The struggle for Socialism has reached a difficult point in its history. The need for politics is even greater now than it was a century ago. We cannot simply wait for the fall of Capitalism — we must struggle to overthrow Capitalism itself. This point is clear, given the reality of our times and the reality of our need to struggle for Socialism. Our struggle, today, is a political struggle, and as a result we need to ensure that we have politics — politics capable of providing us with the ideas, strategy, tactics, and organisation necessary for the overthrow of Capitalism. Our struggle, today, is to define our politics — and to ensure that our politics are Socialist politics. Politics, for the Left, today, is the vital process of developing the ideas necessary to ensure politics goes towards Socialism — towards the struggle for Socialism. Politics are vital, today, because they are so poorly defined in modern Capitalist society. All Socialists need to take part in helping to define the politics needed to overcome Capitalism. All Socialists have a duty of taking part in the politics of the struggle for Socialism. As E.P. Thompson, the great Socialist historian, said: “we all have political responsibilities today” — by which he meant that we all have political responsibilities to achieve Socialism.¹¹ In our society, today, we must seek to define our politics — or Capitalism will do that for us. In our society, today, it is usual that people dismiss politics — as useless. We need politics even more today — due to the reality of politics and due to the struggle of politics. If we do not develop politics, if we do not develop Socialist politics, then the Right will develop their own politics. Socialism needs to become the politics of the people — in order to struggle for the people. We need politics. We must struggle for politics.

Industrial society, specifically the modern world, has created a modern world and a modern society — in the form of Capitalism and Capitalist society. Industrial society has created both the economic and social progress of humanity, since the 19th century, but it has also created the economic, social, political, and intellectual problems of our times. Modernity, in the form of modern Capitalism, has created a choice for humanity itself — a choice between Socialism and Barbarism. Humanity, today, has a choice: either humanity will overcome the problems of modern society, and achieve Socialism, or humanity will be overcome by the problems of modern society, and achieve Barbarism. This choice of modern society has been in

existence since the Industrial Revolution — which created the economic basis for modern society. This choice of modern society has led to much of the progress and regression of humanity since the Industrial Revolution. Many times, in human history, humanity has chosen Barbarism, over Socialism, resulting in the barbarism of the First World War, the Second World War, the Cold War, Fascism, Nazism, exploitation, oppression, environmental disaster, and the threat of nuclear war.¹² Today humanity still faces the choice of modernity — the choice between Socialism or Barbarism. It is time for humanity to choose Socialism.

If humanity is to achieve Socialism, it must develop Socialist politics. Politics are crucial. People might believe that politics is useless but in reality, politics is crucial. Indeed, no development occurs in society except via politics and through politics. Politics is how we will achieve a better society — a society of Socialism. Politics is also crucial for how the working class can achieve its interests — through the reality of politics and political power. There is also the crucial fact that if the working class, and the Left, does not use politics the fact will always be that the Right will use politics. If we reject politics, on the Left, politics will still take place — with or without the Left. It is crucial that the Left take part in politics. It is crucial that the Left uses politics. It is crucial that the Left never abandons politics. The struggle for society, for a better society, is too important to ignore politics. We must struggle for politics. Out of this must emerge the political will to achieve Socialist politics. It is on this basis, a political basis, that we shall achieve Socialism.

A Socialist humanity is possible. This is clear if we look at the potential of humanity and the ability of humanity to change the world. Humanity can make Socialism. Socialism can make a better humanity. Socialism, itself, as the social liberation of the working class and humanity, is not utopian — it is a serious, practical, movement capable of changing the world. This is not an argument that Socialism will make a perfect humanity. Socialism will rather create conditions for a better sense of humanity — and conditions for a more human and humane form of humanity. Socialist humanity will take the limits of existing humanity — and push them to greater limits. With the creation of Socialism, humanity will finally leave the limits of its history and will advance towards greater limits. With the creation of Socialism, with the end of the exploitation of humans by humans, the humanity of humanity will become the real basis of humanity itself. With the creation of Socialism, with the creation of the free development of each and the free development of all, we will see not a perfect humanity, but we might see a better humanity. The objective of Socialism, the liberation of the working class,

and the abolition of class will bring about a human humanity — a Socialist humanity. This is the task confronting humanity today. It is the task of creating a better humanity.

Human freedom is Socialism. The real basis of human freedom lies in the economic and social emancipation of each and of all. This emancipation is Socialism. The working class, because it is the majority, and because it has no economic or social interest in exploitation and oppression, is the only class which can achieve the emancipation of each and the emancipation of all. With the victory of the working class, we shall have the means to achieve the victory of humanity. With the victory of humanity, we have the real basis of achieving freedom. With Socialism we shall achieve freedom.

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(2013)

CHAPTER II

MARXISM AND HUMANISM

This short essay is a study of Marxism and Humanism — specifically the political connection between Marxism and Humanism.

Marxism and Humanism are connected ideas. Both seek to achieve a society based on free and equal human beings. Indeed, Marxism is a product of Humanism and is a humanist idea — based on any real engagement with Marxism as an idea and as a movement. Marxism and Humanism, as revolutionary ideas, seek to achieve a more liberated and developed form of humanity — through the revolutionary struggle of humanity for Socialism and human emancipation. Marxism and Humanism, in the form of Marxist-Humanism, is the real social basis of achieving human liberation and real human freedom. Marxist-Humanism is also the real social basis for achieving Socialism — a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. In the world, today, it is crucial to combine Marxism and Humanism — as the real social basis of achieving Socialism.

In order to begin this essay, we need to define both Marxism and Humanism. Marxism is a revolutionary theory which seeks to both interpret the world and to change the world, in order to achieve the emancipation of the working class and the creation of Socialism. Marxism is the theory and practice of Socialist Revolution. It is the theory and practice of the self-emancipation of the working class. It is the theory and practice of the free development of each and the free development of all. Marxism is (1) materialist philosophy, (2) the critique of political economy, and (3) Socialist politics. Marxism emerged from the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 1800s — as a revolutionary form of Socialism and Communism. Humanism is a revolutionary theory which sees human beings as the central agent of human thought and human action. It is the view that human beings have the agency to change the world — in individual, collective, democratic, and revolutionary terms. It is the view that human life and human freedom, both individual and collective, is central to humanity. Humanism seeks the emancipation of each person and every person. Humanism emerged out of the decline of Feudal society and the

emergence of modern society. Marxist Humanism is not a combination of Marxism and Humanism, rather it is a recognition of the fundamentally humanistic basis of Marxism. Marxism is a form of Humanism. The central premise of Marxism, the revolutionary struggle for the emancipation of the working class and humanity, is a humanistic and revolutionary premise. Marxist Humanism is a central part of the overall revolutionary politics of Marxism.

It is crucial, today, to show the connection between Marxism and Humanism — both in terms of furthering Marxism and in terms of furthering Socialism. In the struggle for Socialism, today, it is crucial to show that Socialism, itself, is committed to its own basic ideas and principles — namely that Socialism is about the struggle for human emancipation and human freedom. Ever since the Cold War a major attack against Socialist ideas and Socialist politics has resulted in the terrible right-wing accusation that Socialism is opposed to human freedom and human liberation — an argument based only on the experience of Stalinism and on the propaganda of the Right. On the contrary, Socialism, in its basic ideas and its basic politics, is committed to the real struggle for human emancipation and human freedom. This can be seen in the real history and the real politics of the struggle for Socialism in the past two centuries — from the Paris Commune of 1871 to the October Revolution of 1917. Socialism, as the struggle for the emancipation of the working class, has consistently been on the side of the real struggle for humanity. Every major struggle and advance for human freedom and human dignity, in the past two centuries, has involved the ideas of Socialism and the movements of Socialism. Indeed, it is the real movements of the working class, through Socialism, which have achieved most of the real progress for humanity since the rise of Industrial society and the Industrial Revolution. This political and historical point is an inescapable part of any real understanding of modern society — as it is ultimately the struggle of the working class, for freedom, which achieves all real social progress in modern times. The humanism of Socialism can be seen, quite clearly, in the ideas of Marx and in the ideas of Marxism. The humanism of Marx and Marxism is shown in the real philosophical basis of Marxism — in the form of Marxist Humanism.

Marxism, in the form of Marxist Humanism, is a political and social movement based on achieving the real liberation of humanity. This is the first and basic political reality of the ideas of Marxism itself, from the ideas of Marx and Engels in the 1840s through to the contemporary developments of Marxism in our own times.

The goal of Marxism is human liberation — through the emancipation of the working class. This means that Marxism is, at its very base, a theory and practice of revolutionary Humanism — as the revolutionary struggle for human liberation.

The goal of Marxism is the emancipation of the working class. Marx, himself, pointed this out, in his great phrase: ‘the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves’.¹ He also outlined this view in his other great phrase: ‘history is the judge — its executioner, the proletariat’.² The most important political statement of Marxism, that ‘the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself’, shows that Marxism is a theory and practice of human agency, through the agency of the working class — who are the majority of humanity and who are the revolutionary class of modern society.³

Marxism is clearly a form of Humanism. Marxism, as expressed by the political thought of Marx and Engels themselves, is clearly based in the basic political and philosophical tradition of Humanism. Marxism itself, as a product of the Enlightenment, Humanism, the Industrial Revolution, and the French Revolution, expresses itself, first and foremost, by its commitment to the free development of each and the free development of all. This means that consistent Marxism must be consistent Humanism.

The central political vision and political goal of Marxism is contained in the idea of working-class self-emancipation. Indeed, the whole theory and practice of Marxism, and Marxist Humanism, can be summed up in a single sentence: Marxism is the theory, the practice, and the movement, of the self-emancipation of the working class.

Marxism emerged from earlier theories and ideas of humanist revolution, specifically from the Enlightenment. The humanism of the Enlightenment, specifically the ideas of the Enlightenment, find their concrete expression in the revolutionary ideas of Marxism — because Marxism is committed to a politics of the free development of each and the free development of all.

Marxist Humanism can be seen as the theory of Socialist Humanism. Indeed, the basic ideas of the theory of Marxist Humanism are best reflected in the practice of Socialist Humanism.

Marxist Humanism emphasises the Humanism of both Marx and Marxism. In philosophical terms Marxist Humanism argues that the central antagonisms of human life, in the form of class, class society, alienation, exploitation, and oppression, can only be overcome by the real self-liberation of human

beings — in the form of Socialist Humanism.

Marxist Humanism begins, always, with the central ideas of Marx himself. Karl Marx, the great German revolutionary Socialist, based his thought on three forms of humanistic ideas — namely materialist philosophy, the critique of political economy, and Socialist politics. These three main components of Marxism are, centrally, humanistic ideas. For Marx, the central objective of Socialism is the emancipation of humanity. This is why, for Marx, Socialism is Humanism, and Humanism is Socialism. This is why, for Marx, Communism is Humanism, and Humanism is Communism.

Marxist Humanism also begins with the premise that human beings, individually and collectively, are autonomous, thinking subjects; subjects who both are shaped by history and society, and who shape history and society. Humanism begins with the premise of real human beings, acting as individuals and as classes, for their own development. Marxist Humanism begins with the premise of real human beings, acting as individuals and as classes, for their own liberation.

We must remember that not all Humanism is Marxist. While all effective Marxist ideas are based, in the end, on humanistic ideas, Humanism, itself, predates Marxism as a basic philosophical premise. The first, modern, ideas of Humanism, e.g. the centrality of human beings to human activity, emerged in the ideas of the Renaissance and in the ideas of the Enlightenment.

Marxist Humanism is part of modern politics — specifically in the form of Socialist Humanism. The modern development of Marxist Humanism emerged in the 1930s and 1950s — after the rise of Stalin and Stalinism, after the Khrushchev speech at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the revelations of the crimes of Stalin, and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution. Indeed, Marxist Humanism emerged, in modern terms, as a concrete response to the barbarism of Stalinism and the degeneration of the Soviet Union into a degenerated workers' state. This process of the development of Marxist Humanism arose in the 1950s, specifically in the year of 1956 and in the aftermath of the crisis of 1956 surrounding the Suez Crisis and the Hungarian Revolution. This moment, in history, signalled the need for a Humanistic basis of Marxism — both in order to achieve Socialism and in order to achieve the real basis of Marxism. Marxism, both in theory and in practice, is humanist and in the 1950s this basis had to be restated. The developments of the 1950s, specifically the need for a Marxist critique of Stalinism, allowed for the re-emergence of a humanistic basis to Marxism and Socialism. Marxism

has always been humanist, since the days of Marx himself, but it took the struggle against Stalinism, specifically in the 1930s and 1950s, to develop the modern basis for Marxist Humanism. This modern basis has been confirmed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and by the decline of Stalinism. In today's politics the only way to really continue the revolutionary development of Marxism and Socialism is through Marxist Humanism and Socialist Humanism. In terms of modern politics, the politics of Socialist Humanism and Marxist Humanism remain clear: the ruthless critique of exploitation, oppression, Stalinism, and Capitalism, the overthrow of exploitation, oppression, Stalinism and Capitalism, and the struggle for Socialism. This position reaffirms the revolutionary potential of Communism itself — in opposition to both the betrayals of Stalinism and the monstrosity of Capitalism. This vision, both of Marxism and of Socialism, remains the real basis for the real liberation of humanity, in modern politics.

Marxist Humanism did not begin in the 1930s or in the 1950s. It began with the ideas of Marx himself. Humanism is a central part of the overall method of Marxism — and the ideas of Marxism. Indeed, the central premise of Humanism, the centrality of humanity, is central to the central premise of Marxism: the emancipation of humanity. Marxism is a humanist philosophy, just as Marx himself was a humanist. This is clear if we look at the real consistency of the ideas of Marx, through the 1830s and 1840s, through to his death in 1883. Marx began his political thought within the tradition of Humanism, and he ended his political thought within the tradition of Humanism. Despite the speculation and arguments of Structural Marxism, there was no epistemological break between the young Marx and the old Marx — except in minor areas of Marx's own developing thought. There is a consistency to the overall development of Marx — from 'The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844' (1844) through to 'Capital Vol. I' (1867). Marx, himself, developed in both political and intellectual terms, throughout his life, but the overall consistency of Marx's politics remains the Humanism of Marx.

Marx was a Humanist thinker — in terms of his ideas and his thought. Marx believed, ultimately, in the development of human beings and the emancipation of human beings. His entire economic, political, social, philosophical, and social thought was based on the humanistic conception of humanity itself, and the possibility of human liberation, human emancipation, and human freedom. Marx was a humanist thinker because his entire conception of humanity was based on the material reality of humanity itself. He fully expressed this in 'The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844' (1844):

Man is directly a natural being. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand endowed with natural powers, vital powers — he is an active natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities — as instincts. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous objective being he is a suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the objects of his instincts exist outside him, as objects independent of him; yet these objects are objects that he needs — essential objects, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers.⁴

Marx was a Humanist thinker — in terms of his conception of humanity and human species-being. Marx correctly identified the reality of human beings, our human essence, as having a ‘species-being’, based on our ability to labour. For Marx, the universal basis of humanity, as a species, is its own humanity: its ability to labour, co-operate, develop, alter, and shape itself. For Marx, the basis of humanity is human creative labour — both as individuals and as a species. It is human creativity which is the basis of human freedom — through self-emancipation. For Marx, the agency of humanity is the basis of our species-being, our essence as humans. This is clearly shown in ‘The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844’ (1844):

Man is a species-being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species (his own as well as those of other things) as his object, but — and this is only another way of expressing it — also because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a universal and therefore a free being.⁵

Marx was a Humanist thinker — because he believed in the complete economic and social emancipation of humanity. Indeed, the political and social vision of his politics was to achieve human emancipation — through the emancipation of the working class. This is the basic political platform of Marxism, in its complete and genuine form. Marx outlined this in ‘The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844’ (1844):

The emancipation of society from private property, etc., from servitude, is expressed in the political form of the emancipation of the workers; not that their emancipation alone is at stake, but because the emancipation of the workers contains universal human emancipation — and it contains this because the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production, and all relations of servitude are but modifications and consequences of this relation.⁶

Marx was a Humanist thinker — in terms of his politics and his Socialism. Marx, correctly, identified Humanism with Communism, e.g., Communism

as the realization of humanity and human emancipation. Marx's humanism is a Socialist Humanism — it views the purpose of real humanism as human emancipation and human freedom, in the form of a Socialist society and a Communist society. This view of Socialism and Communism, as the ultimate form of human emancipation and human liberation, is a constant part of the thought of Marx — from the young Marx to the old Marx. In his 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844' (1844), Marx outlined a humanistic vision of both Socialism and Communism:

Communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature, and between man and man, the true resolution of the conflict between existence and being, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be the solution.⁷

Marx was a Humanist thinker — in terms of his theory of Communism. For Marx, Communism was a society based on real human freedom and real human development — a society of the free development of each and the free development of all. The humanistic basis of Marx's Socialism is very simple and very clear. For Marx, Socialism and Communism is clearly about achieving the real process for human freedom — in the form of the next stage of human emancipation. Marx outlined this humanistic basis of Socialism and Communism, again in his 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844' (1844):

Socialism is man's positive self-consciousness, no longer mediated through the abolition of religion, just as real life is man's positive reality, no longer mediated through the abolition of private property, through communism. Communism is the position as the negation of the negation and is hence the actual phase necessary for the next stage of historical development in the process of human emancipation and rehabilitation. Communism is the necessary form and the dynamic principle of the immediate future.⁸

Marx was a Humanist thinker — in terms of his belief in the real struggle of real people. For Marx, the real struggle for Socialism and for Communism, for real human liberation, is not an abstract struggle, but a concrete struggle, specifically of the majority of humanity against class society. For Marx, the humanistic basis of Communism, itself, is based on the reality that Communism is not a utopian abstraction but a real movement of real people. Marx outlined this in 'The German Ideology' (1845):

Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.⁹

Marx was a Humanist thinker — in terms of history and historical development. While the theory of Historical Materialism, Marx's theory of history, recognises that history is the product of material conditions, productive forces, social relations, social struggle, class struggle, human agency, and social revolution, it also, firmly, recognises the reality that human beings are the real agent of history — through their labour and their struggle. Just as revolution is the motor of history, human beings are the agents of history. Human beings are the active agents of history, and the working class are the executioners of history.¹⁰ Marx, himself, recognised the agency of human beings in history, and their actions in the making of history. For Marxists, human beings are the agent of history. Marx outlined the humanistic basis of his theory of Historical Materialism, in 'The German Ideology' (1845):

The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus, the first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. ... Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life. ... The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production. ... This production only makes its appearance with the increase of population. In its turn this presupposes the intercourse [Verkehr] of individuals with one another. The form of this intercourse is again determined by production.¹¹

Marx believed that human beings make history — by their activity, their labour, and their struggle. This conception of history, in the end, is a theory of history which sees humans as the active agent of history. Historical Materialism, in the end, is a theory of human agency, through history, and