

Writers, Writing, and Revolution

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By

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Beauty is meaningless until it is shared.
—George Orwell

All emancipation is a restoration of the human world.
—Karl Marx

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PREFACE

This book is a study of writers, writing, and revolution. It is a series of essays on writing and radicalism. It is about the connection between writers and revolution. The title of the book, 'Writers, Writing, and Revolution', comes from one of the key essays of the book. The essays of this book are about outlining the fact that the best revolutionaries can be both writers and radicals – people who contribute both to the development of writing and to the revolutionary struggle for social change. Indeed, some of the best radicals in history have been writers – and some of the best writers have been radicals. This book is a Socialist study of the revolutionary connection between writers and revolution – both in history and in politics. This book, in the end, is a book about political ideas and political action – it is a call for writers to work towards Socialism.

The connection between writing and revolution is a vital connection. Revolutions require writers and revolutions require ideas. As V.I. Lenin, the great Russian revolutionary, once wrote: 'without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement'. In both historical and contemporary struggles for revolution, writing has often been crucial – both to inspire revolution and to shape revolution. Indeed, the best revolutions in history, like the English Revolution, the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, and the contemporary struggle for Socialism, all included intellectual revolutions – revolutions which developed ideas in radical ways. Every revolution always produces revolutionary writing.

Writing has been part of the struggle for human freedom since the beginning of writing – at the time of the Urban Revolution. Humanity has always needed writing as a key tool for creating and developing the revolutions which improve and liberate humanity. While writing has often been used to maintain existing societies, and often counter-revolutionary societies, writing has also been used to develop revolutions and revolutionary ideas. Every revolution in history required writing and every revolution required writers.

Revolutions are, in the words of Marx, social struggles which result in the 'revolutionary transformation' of society. They are events which result in

the ‘revolutionary reconstitution of society at large’. They are the economic, social, political, and intellectual struggles which produce human progress in history. They are the locomotives of human history – propelling humanity forward, hopefully towards freedom, democracy, and Socialism.

Writers, as human beings, can be part of the process of revolution. Indeed, writers are a key part of the overall intellectual and social process of revolution. Revolutions, like all social events, produce writing. The best revolutions, in human history, will always produce writers and writing.

This book is a Socialist study. It is a Socialist Humanist study, in the tradition of Democratic Socialism. It is also a Marxist study. It is a study which emphasises the role and importance of social revolution to achieving social progress, including progress in writing. The book attempts to argue that the best types of writers are usually those writers who combine revolutionary ideas with revolutionary writing. The essays of this book argue that writers have a key role in the struggle for a better world – for Socialism. In our own times the most revolutionary ideas are those ideas which struggle for a better world for each and every person – a Socialist world.

R.G. Williams

(2022)

CHAPTER I

WRITERS AND REVOLUTION

This essay is a study of writers and revolution – specifically the connection between writers and the revolutions which created the modern world. The modern world, the world of today, was created by a series of great social revolutions – starting with the emergence of modern society after the Industrial Revolution. These revolutions, as social revolutions, produced social struggles and social conflicts. These revolutions ultimately resulted in modern society – as it exists today. Writers were shaped by these revolutions – and they helped to shape these revolutions. Indeed, writers were a key part of the social revolutions which produced the modern world. Writers will likely be part of any future social revolution which might change the modern world. This essay is a study of how writers relate to revolution and to revolutionary struggle – based on the modern revolutions of modern history.

Revolutions are social struggles which result in the revolutionary transformation of society. They are events which result in the ‘revolutionary reconstitution of society at large’ – as defined by Marx. Social revolutions are key to changing the world. Indeed, the whole process of human history has often relied on the reality of social revolution. Social revolution transforms humanity, and it changes humanity – often for the better. The history of humanity, since the beginning of class society, has been the history of social struggle and class struggle – resulting in social revolution.¹

Revolutions are vital to history and politics in human society. It is through revolution and revolutionary struggle, in economic, political, social, and intellectual terms, that humanity has achieved real social progress. Revolution, in the form of political revolution, has led to real political and social change in human societies. Revolution, in the form of social revolution, has led to the fundamental changes of human societies in history. The great revolutions of human history clearly played a major role in creating modern human society – mostly for the better.²

Human development has relied on revolution. Indeed, human development is ultimately achieved by revolution. Ever since the emergence of humanity, humanity has used revolution as part of the process of real social development and progress. The advance of humanity through Primitive Communism, Ancient society, Feudalism, Capitalism, and on towards Socialism (in the future), has occurred because of real social struggle by humanity – mostly in the form of revolution and social revolution. Revolution is an inevitable and positive part of human development. Revolution is how humanity achieves social progress.³

In society, today, social revolution remains part of modern society. Social revolution is possible in modern society due to the social struggles which obviously exist in modern society. Indeed, the main form of social revolution, today, is Socialism. We currently live and operate in a Capitalist society – a society based on exploitation and oppression. The really revolutionary form of social revolution, today, is the struggle for Socialism – for a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. Socialism, a society built by the working class, is the key form of revolution today.⁴

In society, today, the only effective revolutionary struggle is the struggle for Socialism. The struggle for Socialism is the struggle to change the world for the better – to achieve a world based on the free development of each and the free development of all. This effectively means that the only form of revolutionary struggle, in the world today, is Socialism. Socialism, the idea of the free development of each and the free development of all, is the only revolutionary struggle possible in the world today. Socialism is the only revolutionary struggle possible, today, which is of interest to revolutionaries – including revolutionary writers.

The modern world is the product of social revolution. Modern society, which emerged out of Feudal society, between 1450 and 1850, was created by a series of social revolutions. Indeed, the whole modern history of humanity, since the development of modern society, has been a history of social revolution. The two key types of social revolution, in modern society, are bourgeois revolution and Socialist revolution. Bourgeois revolutions attempt to further the development of Capitalism. Socialist revolutions attempt to further the development of Socialism. The key social revolutions of modern history are: the English Revolution, the American Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the Chinese Revolution. The English, American, and French Revolutions were bourgeois revolutions. The Russian and Chinese Revolutions were Socialist revolutions. These revolutions, as well

as the contemporary potential for Socialist revolution, remain the key social revolutions of modern history.⁵

In the world today the only effective form of revolutionary politics is Socialism – the struggle for a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. If a writer, today, is genuinely interested in changing the world then they must be a Socialist, because Socialism is the only way to change the world for the better today.

The sections of this essay attempt to outline the connection between writers and revolution. The sections also try to outline the way in which writers can shape the social struggle for a better world.⁶

Writers and writing will always be important to the social development of humanity. Indeed, they are part of the revolutionary struggle for human progress. Their work has helped to create a ‘world literature’ – literature which is the common heritage of humanity.⁷ Literature, especially revolutionary literature, is part of the struggle for human freedom.

I. Writers

Writers are people who write. This definition might seem obvious and simplistic, but it is true. Writers are those people who can use effective writing to develop and expand ideas – especially revolutionary ideas. Writers, in the end, are people who engage in developing the ideas of society in a written or literary form. Writers, as individuals and as collectives, have existed since the beginning of the development of writing – as writing emerged out of the literary traditions of humanity. Writers, alongside writing, are a revolutionary force in human society – because their ideas and their work can help to inspire the development of ideas and of revolutionary struggles. Writers are an important social force in human history. Indeed, they can be a revolutionary force – a revolutionary force capable of influencing social revolution.

Writers are people who develop ideas. The purpose of ideas, both in fiction and non-fiction, is to develop ideas in a written and recorded way. This means that writers are vitally important for the development of ideas within any modern society – within any society which uses literature to develop and expand its ideas. Writers, of course, are not the only people within society to develop ideas, as human beings have been developing ideas in other ways, even before the invention of writing, but writers are vitally important to the modern development of ideas.

Writers emerge from within human societies. Indeed, they can emerge from any human society with a literary system or a literary tradition. Writers can emerge from any part of modern society. Indeed, anyone who can read and write, in any language, can theoretically become a writer. Ever since the invention of writing and ever since the development of serious literature, writers have been crucial to the real social development of human societies. Their ideas, and their work, are just as vital to the real social development of human society as any other form of work or labour. Writers, in one form or another, are a type of worker – as their work helps to develop and shape human society. Writers, in the end, are workers. Writers are part of the working class. The majority of writers working today are part of the working class. This fact means that writers can be part of the revolutionary struggle for a better world.

Writers can emerge from any human society that uses literacy and literature. Indeed, every human society with a literary tradition has produced writers – both writers of fiction and writers of non-fiction. Writers, and writing, are almost universal in human societies. Indeed, the development of writers and writing is one of the greatest revolutionary achievements of human history. Writers and writing are revolutionary because they can develop ideas – ideas which can become revolutionary ideas in human development. Writers are also crucial to human development – as their work is able to record and develop ideas for current and future generations.⁸

Writers are human beings. This means that they are fundamentally part of human society. As human beings, writers are fundamentally part of humanity. Human societies, especially today, tend to be class societies – based on the reality of class and class struggle. Most writing tends to be defined by the reality of class and class struggle. Both in history, in politics, and in society, writers tend to reflect the reality of class and class struggle within modern human societies. The ideas of writers are reflective of their times – and the social struggles and social revolutions of their times. Human societies, as class societies, have tended to be defined by their social struggles – leading to social struggle, social development, and social revolution. It is this process which has led to real human development from primitive Communism to Ancient society to Feudal society to Capitalist society and (hopefully) to Socialist society in the future. In our own society, today, which is a Capitalist society, the struggle between the capitalist class and the working class defines our society – and has done since the emergence of industrial and Capitalist society after the long transition from Feudalism to Capitalism (between 1450 and 1850). Writers tend to reflect the politics of their societies and their times. This means that writers can

either express revolutionary ideas or counter-revolutionary ideas. The real social development of writing, especially in the modern world, has been part of the wider history of class struggle – the class struggle between capitalists and workers, and the history of the social struggle between Capitalism and Socialism.⁹

Writers are part of human society. Writers exist due to the development of human society – like all other human beings. They cannot exist outside of human society. No serious writer has ever existed completely outside of human society – because every serious writer needs society, both to help produce their work and to read their work. Indeed, every serious writer understands that their work is part of the development of society – and that their work cannot exist without the development of society. The relationship between writers and society is obviously a social relationship, shaped by the development of society itself. Writers, today, can only choose to either support existing society or to struggle for a better society. The real history of the relationship between writers and society is that writers either support existing society or they support the revolutionary struggle to change society. Writers can either struggle to maintain existing society or struggle to change existing society. This means that writers can serve either the struggle for counter-revolution or revolution within human societies. The best writers, in ideological and literary terms, tend to be those writers who combine their writing with the struggle for a changed and better society.

Writers tend to be individuals, but they are also part of a wider collective. Most writers tend to engage with the work of other writers, or at least have some connection with other forms of writing. Writing, as a form of physical and mental labour, is both an individualistic form of labour and a collective form of labour – as are most modern forms of labour in the real world. Writers, even if they wished to, cannot exist without some social connection to labour and the struggle of labour. This fact means that writers can either choose to support the struggle of the working class, and the struggle for Socialism, or choose to support existing society. Writers cannot ignore the social struggle.

Writers can change society. The power of writing, as a social and intellectual force, in society and in history, shows that writing can change society. This fact means that writers can also change society. Indeed, some of the best examples of individuals, in history, who actually changed or influenced society, for the better, were writers. Revolutionary writers of fiction and non-fiction were essential to achieving the great social and political revolutions which changed humanity. Revolutionary writers of

fiction and non-fiction were also essential to helping humanity to develop the ideas which achieved real social progress for humanity. Writers like Paine and Marx changed the world as much as through their writing as through their actions as great revolutionaries. Any serious writer, regardless of genre or style, can help to produce the ideas capable of achieving serious social change in human societies. The history of writing, itself, shows that writers can be a truly revolutionary force in human history.

Writers can be revolutionaries. Indeed, when we look at the history of revolution, we can easily see that some of the best revolutionaries have been writers. Revolutionaries like Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, and Gramsci were also writers. Indeed, some of the most successful revolutionaries in human history, who actually led and achieved great social revolutions, were also writers. Writers can never be underestimated in terms of their ability to not only inspire revolution but also lead revolution. Indeed, some of the best revolutionary Socialists were also revolutionary writers.¹⁰

II. Revolution

Revolutions can occur in any society. Indeed, any type of class society can produce social revolution as a reality of history and historical development. Any form of class society, even the most undeveloped, has the social potential to produce social revolution. The history of revolution also suggests that revolution can occur in advanced and developed societies – in the right social conditions. Any form of class society, from Ancient society to Feudal society to Capitalist society, can produce revolution and revolutionary situations. This fact and reality about revolutions means that revolution is an inevitable part of human society. As long as humanity is divided by class, exploitation, and oppression, the possibility of revolution clearly exists.¹¹

Revolutions are events which push human societies forward. The development of human society, from Ancient society to Feudal society to Capitalist society and hopefully towards Socialism, means that revolution is a necessary force in human history and human society. Revolution is a motor of history which pushes history forward as a social and historical development.

Revolutions are social and political events where whole societies are changed. They are events where revolutionary classes seize economic, social, and political power – in order to achieve economic, social, and political change. The sheer social power of revolution, as a type of event in

human history, means that revolution has a deep social effect on most human societies.

Writers are important to revolution. They can help make revolution and help inspire revolution, with their ideas, their writing, and their activity. Indeed, where there is revolution (in history, in politics, in society, and in culture) there are writers. The history of revolutionary writers and revolutionary writing shows that writers can really be important to the development of revolutionary ideas and revolutionary struggles. While writers cannot make revolution, they can certainly influence it. They can help to make any social revolution a successful social revolution. Ideas and inspiration can never be ignored in a revolutionary struggle. It is often ideas and inspiration which can make a key difference in the direction of any revolutionary struggle.

Revolutionary writers are especially important to history and to the history of revolution. Just as every social revolution has generated revolutionary ideas, every social revolution has also generated revolutionary writers. We often remember revolutions because of the works of their revolutionary writers. We often remember the American Revolution of 1776 because of the work of Thomas Paine. We often remember the Russian Revolution of 1917 because of the work of Lenin. It is these revolutionary writers, through their writing and their actions, who can really personify the power of any social revolution in history. Indeed, we often remember social revolutions, from history, as much from the works of writers as from the results of revolutions.

Revolutionary writers are important to revolution because they can help to develop revolutionary ideas. Indeed, the historical development of most revolutionary ideas, both in history and in politics, has depended on both the ideas of revolutionary thinkers and writers and the struggles of revolutionary movements. Revolutionary writers, as revolutionaries, are revolutionaries because they can develop those ideas which are effectively revolutionary within their societies. Ideas like democracy and Socialism, for example, as really revolutionary ideas, emerged because of mass social movements and mass social struggles, in history and in politics, but they also emerged because of the struggle of revolutionary thinkers – and because of the struggle of revolutionary writers. The real usefulness of a revolutionary writer, to a revolutionary struggle, is their ability to develop the types of ideas which can support, develop, and create social revolution.¹²

The historical development of revolutionary writing means that it has produced many great revolutionary writers – writers who were effectively connected to the revolutions of their times. Every serious revolutionary writer has been connected to some revolution during their times – especially social revolution. The greatest revolutionary writers are those writers who can connect their ideas and their works to effective social struggles for social revolution.¹³

There are effectively two really revolutionary traditions in writing – the bourgeois revolutionary tradition and the Socialist revolutionary tradition. It is these two traditions which have effectively created the modern world – and it is the Socialist revolutionary tradition in particular which can still change the world. The bourgeois revolutionary tradition of writing, through revolutions like the American Revolution and the French Revolution, created modern Capitalist society – a revolutionary development over Feudal society. The Socialist revolutionary tradition of writing, through revolutions like the Russian Revolution, is part of the modern struggle for Socialism – for a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. Of course, there are probably many other revolutionary traditions in human history, both in writing and in social struggles, but it is the bourgeois revolutionary tradition and the Socialist revolutionary tradition which have really changed the world – and continue to change the world. In effective terms, revolutionary writing, today, is ultimately the result of the struggle to change the world – hopefully for the better.¹⁴

Revolutionary writing, today, is effectively Socialist writing. This is because Socialism is the only effective form of revolutionary politics in the world today. After the experience of the 19th century and the 20th century it can be effectively argued that only Socialism, as an ideology and as a movement, is capable of changing the world for the better today. This means that the only revolutionary movement, today, is Socialism – a movement which is committed to the idea of the free development of each and the free development of all. Every serious revolutionary writer, today, is a Socialist writer.

Revolutionary writers, today, can still help to inspire the ideas and the movements which can make social revolution happen. The history of revolution demonstrates this point very effectively. In the end the struggle for a better world today needs its revolutionary writers. The struggle for Socialism, for example, needs its revolutionary writers.

Revolutionary writing, today, is at its best when it is committed to concretely analysing the world and concretely changing the world. It is this idea of both interpreting the world and changing the world which is central to the best types of revolutionary writing. Karl Marx, the great German Socialist and writer, summed up this idea in his great statement: ‘the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it’. Great revolutionary writers are always committed to this basic idea: to use writing to both interpret the world and to change the world.

Writers can make revolution – but they cannot make it by themselves. Just as ‘people make their own history, but they do not make it as they please’, as Marx wrote, writers can shape history, but they cannot make history as they please. While writers can help to shape revolution, it is important to remember that writers cannot make revolution without a wider social revolution. Indeed, the only type of social revolution that writers can make by themselves is literary revolution. A key point to make about writers and revolution is that all revolutions are larger than writers. While writers can reflect and influence revolution, they simply cannot make revolution by themselves. Writers can produce some of the most important ideas in a revolutionary situation, but they cannot make a social revolution by themselves. This is because every social revolution in history has always been made by a revolutionary social class – such as the capitalist class or the working class. It is social classes which make revolution, and make history, not great leaders, great thinkers, great writers, or great men or women. The great leaders, thinkers, writers, men, and women of history always simply reflect the great revolutionary classes which actually make revolution – and actually make history. The Russian Revolution of 1917 is a great example of this fact. While the Russian Revolution produced great leaders and writers, like Lenin and Trotsky, it was ultimately the Russian people (themselves) who made the Russian Revolution. Writers, like leaders, can personify and influence a revolution but they cannot make a revolution without being part of a revolutionary class. The great revolutions of history would have happened without the writers which influenced them, though it can be argued that such revolutions would have been different without their influence and without their work. Just as the great revolutions of history would probably have happened, in some form or another, without their greatest leaders it is likely that the great revolutions of history would have still happened without the individual writers which influenced them. Individual leaders and writers can help to make revolution, or to influence revolution, but they can never make revolution by themselves. Revolutions are an inevitable part of human history. Revolutions will eventually occur – because the material conditions of class societies produce the social

conditions which produce social struggle and social revolution. Revolutions, like all great social events, occur because of material and social development – not because individuals bring them into existence. In order to be effective revolutionaries and effective revolutionary writers, a revolutionary writer must be part of a mass social movement – a mass social movement which is struggling, effectively, for Socialism.

III. Writers and Social Struggle

Social struggle, through class struggle and social revolution, is an inevitable and necessary part of human development. Every struggle for human freedom and human development, in the past and today, required some form of social struggle. Indeed, this fact is why Marx was correct in saying that 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle'. It is also why Marx was correct in saying that revolution is the 'locomotive of history'. Every struggle for development, freedom, democracy, and perhaps even Socialism, both in the past and today, required social struggle. Social struggle, especially through social revolution, is a motor of history.¹⁵

The purpose of any major social struggle should be to make a better world. Indeed, any serious form of social struggle is a struggle to make a better world – a better world for every man, every woman, every child, every nationality, every race, every sex, every gender, every class, and every person. This purpose of social struggle, for freedom, democracy, and possibly Socialism, should be the real basis for any positive struggle to change the world. Writers, especially revolutionary writers, understand that the purpose of social struggle is to achieve a better society – a better, free, human society.¹⁶

Writers who are committed to creating a better world must be committed to social struggle. Social struggle can take many forms, both reformist and revolutionary, but it is a vital and necessary part of any serious attempt to build a better world for all. Writers who are committed to social struggle, as the basis of a better world, understand that their writing and their work must be part of the wider process of social struggle.

Writers of fiction and non-fiction can help contribute to the development of social struggle – through their work. Since both fiction and non-fiction can help to develop ideas, ideas such as democracy and Socialism, this means that all types of writing can help in the development of positive social struggles to improve and change the world.

Writing can help to shape and influence social struggle – sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. Writing can help to produce the ideas and hopes of social struggle – and also help to guide and structure social struggle.

Writers can take part in social struggle in two major ways. Either they can influence the development of social struggle through their writing, or they can influence the development through their own involvement in the struggle. Writers, in history and today, have done both in their attempts to shape and direct the social struggle for a better world. Writers have influenced the struggle with their ideas and their words, and they have directly taken part in the struggle with their lives and their struggle.¹⁷

IV. Writers and Society

Writers engage with society. The goal of any writer should be to accurately describe the problems of society – while working towards developing the ideas which can help solve the problems of society. A writer should describe existing society – as it really is. A writer should work towards helping society – by producing solutions to existing social problems. A writer should work to improve society. A writer should work towards the liberation of society. A writer should work towards achieving human freedom – through the struggle for Socialism.

Human society, today, has many problems. It is clear that existing human society is based on exploitation and oppression. The reality of Capitalist society has resulted in a human society where the vast majority of human beings are exploited and oppressed by the reality of human society. The reality of Capitalism, imperialism, economic decline, social decline, alienation, racism, sexism, oppression, and the threat of ecological collapse, and the rise of fascism, confronts all of humanity today. These facts demand that humanity produces a solution to these problems. The only solution to these problems is Socialism – a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all.

Marx and Lenin, the two greatest Socialist thinkers of the 19th century and the 20th century, understood the importance of writers to the revolutionary struggle of the working class to achieve a better world – Socialism. Marx and Lenin both understood that the role of the writer, in society, should be to expose exploitation and to work for Socialism. The example of Marx and Lenin should be an example for any revolutionary writer, today. Their example shows how a revolutionary writer can both write and work for

human freedom. Marx produced the view that revolutionary human beings should work for the freedom of all human beings – through the liberation of the working class. Lenin produced the view that revolutionary human beings should be tribunes of the people – working to expose and overcome exploitation and oppression through working-class revolution. Both of these ideas are the basis for real effective revolutionary writing today – both in fiction and non-fiction. Both of these ideas are committed ideas: for a better, revolutionary, world.

Revolutionary writers, like revolutionary parties, should be ‘tribunes of the people’, who expose and criticise every example of exploitation and oppression in modern society.¹⁸ The goal of any revolutionary writer should be to expose any example of exploitation – in order to expose the exploitation of humanity by Capitalism. The goal of any revolutionary writer should also be to expose any example of oppression – in order to expose the reality of oppression in class societies. By doing this not only does a revolutionary writer produce a positive change in the world they also produce a positive part of the struggle for a better world. A revolutionary writer must be committed to the principle that the basis of human freedom is the struggle to achieve human freedom for each and every person – for each person and for all people. This was Marx's view of the human basis of the struggle for human freedom – in the form of Socialism. It was also Marx's view of the human duty to establish human freedom – in the form of Socialism. Indeed, Marx's view of a human basis to struggle for human freedom is the basis of any revolutionary struggle in the world today – and the basis of any revolutionary struggle for a revolutionary writer.

Revolutionary writers effectively fight in any social struggle to improve the world – through revolution and revolutionary struggle. This is the basis of their existence – both as people and as writers. The objective of any serious revolutionary writer is nothing less than to work towards building a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. At point: the objective of the revolutionary writer is freedom. At point: the objective of the revolutionary writer is Socialism.¹⁹

V. Writers and Revolutions

Human history shows that human history is a revolutionary history. It also shows that human history has been shaped by revolutionary ideas and revolutionary writing. This means that the revolutionary and radical writer will always be important to any future struggle for human freedom. This also means that any struggle for a better world, today, requires writers and

effective revolutionary writers. A revolutionary writer, today, is a Socialist writer. As a Socialist writer a revolutionary writer needs to be committed, utterly, to achieving a better society for all of humanity – through the direct social struggle for social change and social revolution. Human history is a revolutionary history. This means that the future of humanity will probably be a revolutionary future. Hopefully, it will be a future which can lead humanity towards Socialism.

Writers have a role to play in the revolutions of today and the revolutions of the future. Ultimately revolutionary writers need to be involved in the day-to-day struggle for a better world if they wish to be effective revolutionary writers – or consistent ones. George Orwell, probably the greatest British Socialist writer of the 20th century, understood the importance of writers to the struggle for a better world. He also understood the power of writing itself as a revolutionary force to achieve social progress. Of course, he also understood that writing can be used to reinforce reactionary and counter-revolutionary ideas, but he also understood that writing and writers are vital to any serious revolutionary struggle. This is why Orwell believed that it is vital for writers, especially revolutionary writers, to always struggle for the truth. Orwell understood that writing, in itself, is a revolutionary force. This is why he believed in the importance of writing for ‘political purpose’, specifically for the struggle against Totalitarianism and for the struggle for Democratic Socialism.²⁰

Some revolutionary writers never get to experience revolution or the direct struggle for revolution. History and politics, as well as certain social developments, like counter-revolution, can often prevent a revolutionary writer from directly taking part in a revolutionary struggle. Despite this a revolutionary writer can still contribute to the struggle for revolution and social change – through writing itself. If a writer commits themselves to their work and to their writing their work and their writing can still positively inspire the struggle for social change and social revolution. The power of writing is a revolutionary power. It is a power which allows any person, who can read and write, to shape the direct struggle for revolution – by contributing to those revolutionary ideas which can help to spark and shape revolution. By directly writing, and by directly seeking to shape social struggle, any writer can be part of the struggle for a better world. Indeed, the duty of any revolutionary writer is to help improve the conditions for revolutionary struggle – for the revolutionary struggle to liberate humanity.²¹

Writers cannot predict the future. Indeed, no one can predict the future completely. What writers can do, however, is speculate about the future and the future of revolution. It is likely that the future will be shaped by revolution – simply because of the fact that we live in a society based on exploitation and oppression. This fact means that the future will probably produce possibilities for Socialism and for Socialist revolution. The duty of any revolutionary writer is to struggle for that future in any positive way that they can – just as it is the duty of any Socialist to struggle to achieve human freedom. Writers can and should take part in the revolutions of the future. If they are really revolutionary writers then they will be committed to ensuring that those future revolutions are successful revolutions – revolutions which can lead humanity towards freedom, democracy, emancipation, and Socialism.

Writing and revolution are connected in the modern world. It is impossible to have a revolution without writing. Indeed, any serious form of social revolution, today, requires ideas as a means of organising and developing social struggle. Revolutionary writers have a duty towards trying to improve the world – through their writing, their work, and their political and social activity. This means that writing, as an act of labour, is part of the real social struggle for a better world. Writing is part of developing the ideas of human freedom. Writing is part of developing the struggle for human freedom. Writing is part of the eternal struggle for a better human world. Writing and revolution are part of the same process – the process of achieving human freedom through Socialism.

If a writer wishes to change the world, today, then they must both interpret the world and change the world. If they wish to really change the world for the better, then that means that they must be on the side of the struggle for a world based on the free development of each and the free development of all.²² This means that a writer must be a Socialist and a Socialist writer – if they are really interested in changing the world for the better. The struggle for Socialism, and a better society, will not be won purely through writers and writing – it will be won by the working class – but writers have an important role in the struggle for a better world. Writers and revolution are a powerful combination. They are part of our common struggle – for revolution and for a better world.

Notes

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CHAPTER II

WRITING AND REVOLUTION

This essay is a study of writing and revolution. Specifically, it is a Marxist study of how writing has shaped social revolution in history. Any serious study of the history or politics of revolution will show that writing is a key part of any social revolution. Indeed, the history of writing has always been connected to the history of social revolution. Writing is a key revolutionary force in human history. It is a key revolutionary force for both developing the ideas of revolution and the struggle of revolution. This means that in order to understand the history and politics of revolution we must understand the history and politics of revolutionary writing. All revolutions require revolutionary writing. Without revolutionary writing there can be no revolution. As Lenin said: ‘without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement’.¹

Every modern human society, today, uses writing – in some form. This is because of the power of writing as a means of communication and development. Every major society, since the development of industrial society, has used writing. This shows the real revolutionary power of writing.

Human development has always been a revolutionary development. Ever since our species emerged, through the process of social and biological evolution, humanity has always used revolution and social struggle in order to achieve human progress – towards development and freedom. Ever since the emergence of the human species, the development of humanity has been a revolutionary struggle. Writing, and the invention of writing, was part of that revolutionary struggle. Writing, and the invention of writing, was a social revolution.

Revolution, in the form of social revolution, has also been part of humanity for centuries – since the beginning of humanity itself. Indeed, the history of humanity is the history of revolution: the Neolithic Revolution, the Urban Revolution, the Feudal Revolution, the Capitalist Revolution, and the contemporary struggle for Socialism. Humanity, so far, in its social history, has proceeded through various forms of society: Primitive Communism,

Ancient society, Feudal society, Capitalist society, and the contemporary possibility of Socialism. Revolution is a key part of the social struggle of humanity – for development, freedom, and progress. Revolutions have always been crucial to human progress. Humanity will always use revolution as a means of achieving social progress. Revolution is how humanity achieves progress – through ‘the revolutionary reconstitution of society’.² The goal of social revolution, in the end, is simple: human freedom. Writing, since the invention of writing, has always been a crucial part of this revolutionary struggle.

Revolutions are social events and social struggles. They are historic, economic, political, intellectual, and social events where a revolutionary class seizes social power and uses it to transform existing society. Marx, the great German Socialist, defined revolution as ‘the revolutionary reconstitution of society at large’. He also defined revolution as the ‘revolutionary process of transformation of society. Revolution, in historical and social terms, is the way in which humanity has achieved most of the social progress of humanity itself since the emergence of the human species. For Marx, revolution is the process of the historical development of humanity – towards human emancipation and human freedom.³ Writing, in the form of revolutionary writing, has always played a key role in the modern struggle for human freedom.

Humanity is a revolutionary species. Indeed, humanity has achieved most of its social progress, since the beginning of human evolution, through a series of social struggles and social revolutions. Writing is part of the revolutionary history of humanity.

Writing and revolution have always been connected – since the time when humanity first began to record social and political events and since the time when humanity first began to develop revolutionary and radical ideas.⁴ Writing and revolution will always be connected – with writing being a key tool of social revolution.⁵

There are two key revolutionary traditions in modern history – the bourgeois revolutionary tradition and the Socialist revolutionary tradition. The bourgeois revolutionary tradition seeks to achieve social revolutions which further the development of Capitalism. The Socialist revolutionary tradition seeks to achieve social revolutions which achieve the liberation of the working class and the entirety of humanity. This essay deals with how both the bourgeois and Socialist revolutionary traditions have dealt with writing – with revolutionary writing.

The sections of this essay attempt to outline the connection between writing and revolution – both in history and in politics. The sections also try to outline the way in which writing has shaped the key revolutions which created the modern world: the English Revolution, the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the Chinese Revolution. Writing, in the end, is part of the revolutionary struggle of human history – for human freedom.

I. Writing

Writing is one of the great achievements of humanity. Writing is a key revolutionary development. It is the process by which human beings record data, information, ideas, and thought, through language, using organised symbols. Writing is a process of human beings using symbols in order to develop their societies. Writing allows human beings to record ideas and thought across time and space – from the past to the present to the future. It is one of humanity's greatest achievements. Writing has existed ever since humanity made the transition from Neolithic societies to Urban societies – at the time of the Urban Revolution. Indeed, writing itself emerged from a revolutionary process – the development of human society itself following the evolution of humanity, the Neolithic Revolution, and the Urban Revolution. Ever since the beginning of urban societies, humanity has used writing to help develop itself and its social development. Since the Industrial Revolution, every progressive social struggle for human development, and human freedom, has used writing. Ideas such as Enlightenment, Rationalism, Democracy, and Socialism, required the invention of writing as part of their development. Human beings will always use writing. As long as the human species continues to exist in an organised form it is likely that human beings will use writing as a key part of developing humanity itself. Human beings will always need to use some form of writing as an effective means of recording the data, information, ideas, and thought required to achieve real social progress for humanity itself. In modern societies, writing is a crucial part of being human. It allows people to educate themselves and to pass on their ideas and their struggles to future generations. It allows human beings to explore and develop their ideas – hopefully for a better society and for a better world. The only circumstance that could destroy the ability of human beings to use writing would be the utter destruction of humanity itself. Any struggle for a better humanity, and for a better future, will require some form of writing – as writing can be used to develop the sort of ideas needed to achieve social progress. The struggle for a better humanity will always need writing – as writing can be used to develop revolutionary ideas and revolutionary struggles.⁶

II. Writing and Society

Writing has always been a social process – ever since the invention of writing during the Bronze Age. Every example of writing, in human history and in human society, has reflected human history and human society. This means that writing is social. This means that writing is political. Every example of writing produced by human beings always reflects, in one way or another, the ideas, ideology, politics, and hopes of the society which produced it. This means that writing is social, and that writing is part of society. The social and historical development of writing confirms that writing is part of the social and historical development of society in general. Every period of human history, and human writing, reflects this basic historical and literary reality. Human beings, since the invention of writing, have used writing to reflect and to develop their societies. The best form of writing, in human societies, is writing which attempts to progress human society – by struggling for a better and more developed society. The best forms of writing always attempt to develop the social and political ideas which can achieve progress in human societies – towards a world without exploitation or oppression. The development of society has produced a great deal of writing, in the thousands of years since the invention of writing. In social and historical terms writing has produced both revolutionary ideas and counter-revolutionary ideas. The best forms of writing, in the end, are always revolutionary examples of writing – writing which attempts to push forward the real social development of humanity in real social terms. Writing has not always produced progressive or revolutionary writing, as shown by the reality of counter-revolutionary and reactionary writing at various points in history, but the best writing will always be writing which attempts to argue for the real liberation of humanity – the real liberation of society.

III. Writing and History

Writing is crucial to history. It is crucial both to recording history and to making history. History is the process of human development, and the process of recording human development. Writing allows history to be recorded and remembered. Writing also allows history to help generate revolutionary struggles and ideas – through the transmission of ideas. Recorded history, in recorded and written terms, is the process of human beings writing about the past. Writing allows history to be recorded, written, and studied. Writing allows humanity to remember its past and its past development – in firmer and more accurate terms than oral traditions. Since the invention of writing (during the Urban Revolution), writing has allowed

human beings to accurately understand the past – and to understand history. Written history, by recording with the past and by engaging with the past, allows human beings to learn from previous developments – and to learn from past historical experience in the struggle for social progress. By studying the historical reality of exploitation and oppression, as a reality of history, human beings can learn how to struggle for a society without exploitation and oppression – a society of Socialism. Written history is vital to achieving human progress – as it provides the tools to both record the past and to investigate the past. History, in the form of written history, emerged from the works of the first Greek historians in the 400s BCE – specifically Herodotus and Thucydides. Their work showed that history can be effectively recorded through writing and through historical research. Their work also showed that writing is the most effective tool for researching and recording history as a process of human development. Indeed, history and written history is a vital part of human civilisation – and has emerged independently in most human societies. Since the emergence of written history, writing and history have always been connected. It is the connection between writing and social struggle which allows writing to be a powerful social force for social revolution.⁷

IV. Writing and Literature

Literature is a specific form of writing. It is a form of writing which expresses ideas and theories – in the form of prose, prose fiction, prose non-fiction, poetry, drama, and oral tradition. From philosophy to history, from novels to plays, from science to fiction, literature is specifically any form of writing or communication which communicates ideas – in the form of literary ideas, economic ideas, social ideas, philosophical ideas, and political ideas. Literature, in basic terms, is how writing really communicates ideas. Literature has existed since the beginning of writing – and perhaps has existed since the beginning of humanity itself in the form of oral literature and oral culture. While other forms of writing often communicate data or very specific ideas, literature is often able to communicate very broad and very complex ideas. Indeed, literature is able to communicate the most original and powerful ideas yet developed by humanity – and to communicate them in effective written terms. Every society is capable of producing literature – either in the form of written literature or oral literature. Every society capable of producing writing is capable of producing literature – writing which communicates ideas. Literature is the ultimate form of writing because it is able to express the most powerful forms of ideas and theories which have been developed by human beings – since the beginning of literature after the invention of writing. The history