Clip: HOBSBAWM ERIC_ERIC HOBSBAWM WITH PAT THA

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S1 **00:01:26:03**
I'm very happy to introduce Eric Hobsbawm, professor emeritus of history at Birkbeck College, University of London, one of the leading Marxist historians of recent times and indeed one of our leading modern historians of any persuasion. I think the best place to begin is at the beginning. It's always struck me as somehow fitting that you were born in such an exotic location as Alexandria in the suitably revolutionary year of 1917. How did this come about? Your parents, I think, were not Egyptian, so.

S2 **00:02:00:24**
It's part of the history of imperialism. My mother got a free trip to Egypt after she'd finished her secondary school. And of course, there was some kind of uncle there who had a trading thing. She came from Austria. I don't have to tell you that there was a strong interest of the Habsburg Empire in the Middle East. My father got there because one of his brothers got a job in the Egyptian post and telegraphs. In those days Egypt was run by England. And there in Alexandria, the two met. And because shortly afterwards, the war broke out. They couldn't marry and live either in England or in Austria. And so that's how I came to be born in Egypt.

S1 **00:02:56:01**
Your father had actually come from London and grown up in the east end of London. Yes.

S2 **00:03:00:19**
He did. My grandfather migrated from Poland, but most of his children were already born in London. And so, I mean, my father was already born in the East End and brought up there.

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S1 **00:03:14:21**
So he grew up in the kind of East End working class Jewish community that you've written about.

S2 **00:03:20:05**
Not at all. He and his generation, his brothers assimilated and tried to become as British as it possibly could, as fast as it possibly could.

S1 **00:03:30:14**
In what ways? What did that assimilation consist of?

S2 **00:03:34:08**
Well, they try to read English poetry. They, in fact, try to get away as far as possible, as quickly as possible from their background. And they had to do this even more effectively because, of course, they didn't get much schooling. It wasn't until the very youngest that they actually managed, as it were, to get through some proper schooling. In many ways it was really like non-Jewish working class people because my grandfather was a cabinetmaker.

S1 **00:04:07:02**
So but shortly after the war, your parents left Alexandria and went to Vienna, I think.

S2 **00:04:11:09**
Yes, I think my mother couldn't stand it there anymore. And so they both went to Vienna and that's where I was brought up. Wow.

S1 **00:04:20:13**
Then in 1930, I think he moved to Berlin.

S2 **00:04:22:22**
31 after my parents died after birth. And ideas.

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S1 **00:04:27:20**
Which was not a good time to move to Berlin.

S2 **00:04:29:24**
Oh, marvelous time. That's the making. I mean, it's been no place more interesting to be if you were just getting to the age of 1415 than Berlin in the last years before Hitler. I mean, almost everything that I learnt, as it were, began in Berlin in those days.

S1 **00:04:47:22**
What sort of things and how particularly excited how we introduced to Marx?

S2 **00:04:54:20**
Well, I became a communist, of course.

S1 **00:04:57:03**
You see Why, of course.

S2 **00:04:59:23**
Well, I wasn't a Christian. I wasn't a German, so I couldn't become a Nazi or anything like that, which quite a lot of young Germans did. And consequently, one had to go on the left, become something revolutionary on the left. And that seemed to be the obvious thing. Right in the middle of the slump is an appalling time. I didn't want to become Zionist either, which would have been another alternative. And then at a certain stage while I was going around shooting my mouth off, one of my teacher said, You clearly have no idea what you're talking about. Go to the school library and read some stuff. And that's how I began.

S1 **00:05:48:10**
And you can't do anything in 1933. And then he went to Cambridge.

S2 **00:05:52:06**
Then I went to Cambridge.

S1 **00:05:53:05**
Does that not rather culture shock for someone coming newly to relatively newly to England? No.

S2 **00:05:59:20**
The culture shock was coming to England and discovering that secondary school grammar school was about five years younger in intellectual interests and maturity than what I'd been used to in Berlin. Coming back to Cambridge was taking sort of carrying on from where I'd left off in 1933 in in a German gymnasium.

S1 **00:06:24:12**
You really felt you could carry on it, wasn't it? Still. In what ways? I mean, what what did you miss when you came to a secondary school in England compared with your education in Germany?

S2 **00:06:34:15**
It wasn't so much the education. It was a general intellectual atmosphere. I mean, it's it was way behind simply in every respect, you see. One came over from Germany full of what you might say, current stuff, you know, came over humming songs from Brest and Veils and all that kind of stuff. You see, I came talking, whatever it is about Marx and Lenin and Stalin and.

S1 **00:07:09:21**
All the rest, and the kids at school here knew nothing.

S2 **00:07:11:24**
About that. Who knew absolutely nothing about it, for that matter. Even in terms of sexuality, you see the discussions, the knowhow and so on. In the Berlin scene, there was way ahead of anything that had been. So it wasn't until another three years that one really.

S1 **00:07:29:13**
Got to Cambridge that you met people who did talk the same sort of language and the same sort of same kind.

S2 **00:07:34:03**
Of language talk, the same sort of terms about the things.

S1 **00:07:37:23**
What about on the educational side of Cambridge there? What's what long run effect do you think you're training as a historian in Cambridge had, if any?

S2 **00:07:51:15**
Difficult to say. I think it almost certainly gave me I mean, far more of what I think is very good thing, namely the British empiricist tradition. See, I mean, if I'd been brought up on the continent, I'd almost certainly I may very well have become a philosopher. I'm not sure I would have liked that. I would have spent far more time on all these methodological and theoretical discussions probably than I did. I think English education in general, Cambridge educated in particular, kept kept me down to brass tacks much more. Most of us educated ourselves because with 1 or 2 exceptions, there wasn't anybody at Cambridge that we really took very seriously. It is unbelievable how provincial English historical life was. So in a way it was the choice of doing history rather than the teachers, which made a great difference to us. And then we talked to each other. You must remember that in the later 30s, an enormous number of the livelier people and the able and intelligent people, never mind what their subject was, were indeed on the left and work on in the Communist Party. It it is very difficult to remember because an awful lot of them, of course, left afterwards. But if you weren't at the time, it was really rather surprising you There had to be special reasons. I mean, I think this was to a very great extent in my time, the effect of the Spanish Civil War, which radicalized people and of course the reaction against appeasement and Hitler.

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S1 **00:09:47:04**

Something that obviously was important to your work in the years immediately after the war was the Communist Party history group that was founded in 1946, which obviously brought together quite exceptional group of young Marxist historians who've gone on to be immensely influential in the development of the subject since the war. Can you tell us something about that atmosphere, for example, the influence of Maurice Dobb, who was a senior figure amongst you all, obviously did have some influence on you.

S2 **00:10:15:06**

I think Maurice was in many ways the crucial influence, not so much to his own personality because he was a very sort of reticent and modest man who hardly ever opened his mouth. But through the studies in the development of capitalism, which as you remember, came out just about that period and which for the first time try to see the development of capitalism, historically speaking, as a whole. And most of us were in a sense, trying to dot the I's and cross the t's of dobb. Alternatively, see whether he was right. But it gave us, if you like, a basic theme on which we could embroider, you see.

S1 **00:11:07:07**

But very few of the English Marxist historians have become economic historians in a strict sense, which I've always found rather surprising for Marxists. I mean, Dobb was an economist and economic historian.

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S2 **00:11:19:21**

Well, I don't think it's so surprising since I mean, Marxist history isn't specifically concerned with the minutia of economic development. We all got into economic history because this is the only part of history which appeared to leave scope for the sort of things we were interested in. That's why in Cambridge, in my day, I mean, all the people were in a sense pupils of or went to the lectures of Boston because in his lectures, economic history lectures were so all the Marxists went to went to Boston, they wouldn't have gone to whoever it might be, Trevelyan or something like this, who's also giving lectures in time. But our interest wasn't specifically with this. Our interest was indeed with the, if you like, the links between the base of what we thought economic and social development and the the sum total of history, all the other things had happened. So we took Dobb as a starting point and in fact we one has two funds, the Marxist. Obviously the general development of world capitalism is the main theme. It's a spine, if you like, of the body of history. It ought to be for everybody else. But it is not the body itself.

S1 **00:12:55:04**

What influence do you think the Cold War had on intellectual life and professional life in the late 40s and 50s? For example, we've talked about attempts by his right wing historians to boycott past and present when it was first established.

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S2 **00:13:13:19**

Well, it had several effects in the first place. Of course, it isolated us very considerably, which incidentally had the paradoxical effect of forcing us back on our own resources. And if we hadn't been so isolated, we wouldn't have spent about ten years of an incentive, if you like, intensive mutual seminar, you see, which is in fact what we did, which was enormously helpful to all of us, never mind what our specific interests were or subsequent work was in a second place. It certainly, I think. It aroused us to the existence, if you like, of specific undesirable trends in history, not merely as before the war was. After the war, it became increasingly clear that there were a number of people who were, in a sense, having views of history which were specifically designed, you know, in order to be unlike Marxist history.

S1 **00:14:25:23**

Who particularly.

S3 **00:14:27:09**

Oh.

S2 **00:14:29:15**

Well, take case in point, there was this little book on capitalism in the historians in which the pre thatcherites started to put forward their view, you see about how Marx got capitalism all wrong, how it was marvellous and had been marvellous all the time. And so we spend a good deal of our time, in fact trying to think of how to controversies, tendencies. And of course in doing so, we also discovered that we were not isolated. We were part of a broader, if you like, consensus of progressive Liberal Labour and other people. That's why we found it past and present, not as a Marxist journal, far from it, but as somebody a journal which could get together, if you like, the consensus left view of history, which we thought of quite rightly as the dominant view in those days.

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S1 **00:15:32:04**

Obviously there's very intensive debates that you had with Communist Party and other historians in the 40s and 50s had the considerable influence on the work that you were doing. For example, the debate about the standard of living, I gather, came out of these discussions and soon there was some sort of response to the pre Thatcherite work that you were talking about.

S2 **00:15:56:03**

I'm not sure that this is always such a good idea because I mean a good deal of the work that I wrote in those days was indeed written specifically to controversy. What I thought was bad. Like for instance, the view that everything had been golden for the workers all the time. It was very difficult, you see, because we weren't we weren't taking the view, which at this time was being taken, say, among French Marxists or other French communists and others, that you had to prove that things were getting worse and worse for the workers. All the time. We thought this was absurd. Everybody in England thought this is totally absurd, as indeed it is. You see, at the same time, we did feel that it was important to point out what the Hammonds had pointed out, and the Webbs had pointed out that life was certainly not all peaches and cream for the workers in the earlier days of the industrial Revolution, and it was actually no reason why we would expected it to have been. And similarly, I took up the matter of the labour aristocracy very largely because I forget who it was. I think it was Trevor Roper who doesn't know much about it and who are Parson somewhere mentioned that he thought he was. Perhaps it wasn't somebody else, perhaps he was Hugh Seaton Watson Both people that I like or liked very much and get on very well, but they kind of dropped something saying this was just one of these Marxist myths, you see. So I said, Well, you see, you've got to show that it isn't just a Marxist myth that actually a lot of people in Victorian times thought there was and operating in these terms and that Marx and Engels had actually got it from contemporary what they thought was contemporary observations.

S1 **00:17:47:18**
So out of these kinds of influences, in fact, you wrote in the 1950s a succession of essays that remain 30 years later, real importance in 19th century British history. The essays that you published in Laboring Man in 1964. And their common characteristic is that they look both at the institutions of the labour movement and the wider social and economic experience they grew out of and the connections between them. We may have conscious the developing a new approach to labour history. Or do you think you building on older traditions like the Hammonds?

S2 **00:18:23:22**
No, I don't think I was conscious of developing a new I mean, Labour history was in a poor shape. Labour history had started off pretty well, I think, with the Webbs and Wallace and people in those days. And then I think in the interwar period, I mean, except for coal, it wasn't very exciting really. And in effect it seemed to me and it seemed to several others that. In some ways, you would have to get beyond the history of organizations and the history of parties and institutions and try and look at the working class itself.

S1 **00:19:15:08**
As a kind of mythology. Seems to have grown up among my generation that up to the early 1960s, there was only institutional labor history. And then along came Edward Thomson and the making of the English working class. And this opened our eyes and we discovered working class culture. And this seems to me not to do justice to the group of historians who produced essays in labor history. Do you think it's possible to in certain ways, in fact, social history in the 1960s and 70s regressed in some ways from what was developing in the 50s, particularly in moving away from looking at institutions in their social setting and looking perhaps too much at working class culture and too little at the institutions and organizations.

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S2 **00:20:01:07**

Perhaps So I think that there's a tendency to the main thing I think that went wrong in the 1970s is among the young, more radical historians is that they thought the only relevant things were things which are directly connected with the labor movement and directly connected to the labor movement in recent times.

S1 **00:20:25:07**

In the 1950s. In fact, your own interests seemed to take off in a variety of directions, or maybe a lot of interest. You'd had became more public in the 1950s. And so far we've mainly talked of you as a historian of British labor, but in fact you've made a distinguished contribution in a variety of fields. Perhaps we could look at each of these in turn. First of all, the general synthesising histories, the age of revolution, the age of capital. And there's a third volume shortly to come.

S2 **00:20:53:02**

Shortly to come.

S1 **00:20:54:05**

And then you British volume, industry and empire. Did you. Do you feel it's important for historians to be accessible to a wider public to write these more general, more accessible books?

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S2 **00:21:09:05**

There are two two sides to this problem. The first, yes, it is important, obviously, to write for public or non historians. If there is one thing that, as it were, runs like a red thread through the whole careers of people like myself, it is that the past is interesting because of what we want to do or think about the present. I personally have never been, if you like, an antiquarian and I've never even found myself having this sort of speak. The interest in archive grabbing for its own sake, which I can understand, because if one actually finds himself doing it, it's enormously fascinating and one gets enormous pleasure out of it. But in a sense, the idea of simply drowning oneself or going underground for years simply because one cannot resist opening the next, you know, the next folder or the next package.

S1 **00:22:25:03**

That's never appealed to you?

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S2 **00:22:27:19**

No, it hasn't. I mean, in a sense, I've always, to this extent, been present oriented in a sense. I want to know how the past has become the present. And I think it's terribly important to, if you like, get people who are not historians to understand what and find to make make it read. This is not a Marxist tradition. This is a British tradition in this country. We have fortunately got a very fine tradition of communicable ity. Yes. Going back, if you like, to gibbon, but certainly to Macaulay and represented in our own lifetime by all manner of people. AJP, Taylor, Trevor Roper, if even if you like GM. Trevelyan Even though I don't cherish him as highly as some do as a historian. So it's an attempt, if you like, to introduce some hard thinking MPs. In reality, in what the 19th century German used to call the zeitgeist the spirit of the times, which is another way of saying we know that it's not an accident that whatever it is, the period of the 1950s, 1960, 1970 sees a large number of things happening simultaneously a youth culture and a technological revolution and rock and roll and the end of quote unquote, modernism and so on. But why? How do all these things hang together, you see? And that's one of the things that I think an attempt at writing synthetic history enables you to explore. You can't do much more, you see, because in a way it's terribly difficult, if you like, actually to prove your guesses, but nevertheless try and establish these connections. Well, it's a thing which was probably the earliest historical question that I that's one of the things that actually made me want to become a historian when I was in a schoolboy.

S1 **00:24:34:07**

The question about how how.

S2 **00:24:36:03**

Things hang together.

S1 **00:24:39:19**

What gave rise to your interest in primitive rebels, bandits, peasants.

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S2 **00:24:44:17**

In the first instance? I think I always had an interest in sort of marginal speak, popular phenomena. Purely personally, I think. But in the second instance, I began to wonder, particularly in the 1950s, when I began to have a sort of seriously rethink, if you like, my view of revolutionary movements and the working class movements. I began to wonder about the classical left wing view that had been, as it were, a straight forward progress from some kind of prehistoric phase up to and culminating in the development of working class parties or Communist Party. I mean, in many ways, the major incentive to systematize these rethinking was undoubtedly the the crisis in the communist movement. But I must say that in some ways my interest in this had begun earlier. Largely, it began with a series of travels which I had in the Mediterranean from the early 50s on, which brought me face to face with a number of people who, in a sense were not reacting like British workers or British intellectuals. It comes to that behind all is a search for what you might call the the theory, the intellectual universe of ordinary common people and what they believe to be a right organization of society and under what circumstances you fight for it and and how far you fight. This is very important issue. I can't say that I'm the only man doing it. For instance, Barrington Moore has written an extremely interesting book in this field, but I believe. Leave that This is. Well, this is one of the things I find myself increasingly interested in would like to do some more work on.

S1 **00:27:03:24**

What about Captain Swing, which you published with George Ruddy in 69. In a sense, that's a study of British primitive rebellion. I've sometimes wondered whether you were overstated the primitive, inarticulate, pre political character of it, and maybe underestimated the links with urban, small town popular radicalism that maybe these rural writers had a stronger awareness of their rights and liberties in a political sense than you suggest. I think some Edward Thompson made.

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S2 **00:27:34:09**

This is possible. I am inclined to think that probably the way in which farm labourer thought was not itself very much affected by the rather more sophisticated discussions in the towns. But nevertheless, I don't think we actually denied the impact of urban radicalism and of people trained in urban radicalism such as village craftsmen.

S1 **00:28:07:04**

Here's a related point that strikes me more generally about your work is obviously fascinated by the way that economic and social experiences and institutions shape people's lives and shape their politics. But you've given very much less attention to how they're shaped and influenced by contact with political institutions, with local government, with central government, with the police, for example. Is this fair or is this a misreading of your interests?

S2 **00:28:35:09**

I think it's a fair criticism. I mean, I've found, for instance, in the historiography of banditry, which has developed enormously since I first doing it, and I think I can claim, as it were, to have created this particular subject in 1959, if there is one major change I would now make in the sort of model I originally suggested, it is to introduce a much greater importance for the political element, political and institutional element. That seems to me clear. So I think it is probably true. I think this is it's probably due to my Marxist upbringing that I naturally concentrated first on the economic base and then went straight on. But it is weakness. I think this particular upbringing, that one tended to leave out the intermediate phase of institutions and of political organisation. But I this is I make this as a general point without necessarily admitting that on any particular issue, I underestimate you.

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S1 **00:29:51:02**

Also, throughout your career I've been engaged with the politics of the moment. You've written about the dangers of left intellectuals debating politics in isolation from active political engagement. They get too far removed from real politics. But how much engagement is possible for intellectuals with politics? Do politicians listen to intellectuals who are inclined sometimes to say things they don't want to hear? I mean, Neil Kinnock appeared to be listening to you at one point, but more recently you may have been saying things he doesn't like so much.

S3 **00:30:22:24**

Well.

S2 **00:30:24:08**

There are very serious problems about this. I think for intellectuals during history or indeed any other intellectual thing is not the same thing as applying it to politics. To what extent his politicians listen, that's yet a third question. They listen to what they want to hear and they don't listen to what they don't want to hear. And I think one of the most important thing for historians to do, never mind what their political commitment is, is to pay no attention to this.

S1 **00:31:01:00**

But to keep on talking.

Clip: HOBSBAWM ERIC_ERIC HOBSBAWM WITH PAT THA

S2 **00:31:02:06**

Keep on saying, because sooner or later somebody is going to listen. That, I think, is what Keynes meant when he said that politicians are generally. Applying the series of some defunct economist. If The Economist, while alive, had not been working about the politicians when he was dead or she was dead, wouldn't be following. But the point I'm trying to make is this that many of us history is a deeply political exercise, always has been. The only historians who are not deeply political are the sort of people who produce dictionaries or who publish documents. But in fact, all the important historians have been politically committed very much one way and another. And but I think given that fact, given that a great deal of historical debates or debates about the present in fancy dress and even the more serious debates which start off with a problem which arises in thinking about the present, you see, and which then gives you an ideas which are then projected backwards. Given all this, it is still, in my view, enormously important that historians should not confuse themselves as politicians, however deeply committed they may be.

S1 **00:32:41:23**

Your interpretation of the rise and decline of labour depends very much on its rootedness in a specific type of culture that emerged in the late 19th century, carried on and then has been in decline since the 1950s. This interpretation has been challenged from another number of points of view. But one thing that interests me about it is the culture you describe is very much a masculine one of cloth caps and football matches. And I wonder where the women of the working class fit into your vision of working class consciousness and working class culture.

S2 **00:33:19:14**

In the first place? I don't accept that. My view is working class is based on a culture learn. I think culture is a symptom of this consciousness.

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S1 **00:33:30:20**

What role do women play in this separate working class culture?

S2 **00:33:34:13**

Do they initially seem to me to be the essential victims of it? Very largely because at least married women. But I think the victims because very largely extruded from, ideally speaking, from the labour market and therefore not given the kind of recognition that people who were in the official labour market received in some way or another, and if they got into the labour market, it was because the family was so poor that the wife had to work and this again didn't do him any didn't do the status any good. That's why I think the enormous change in the position of women in recent decades is essentially connected with the enormous increase of the work in of married women, the entry of married women to the labour market. I would say that this, rather than any kind of feminist propaganda, is at the bottom of the transformation of women's ideology.

S1 **00:34:52:13**

But the important framework around all of your work is your Marxism. And that's obviously absolutely central to you and your way of thinking. What do you think is the distinctive contribution Marxism makes to the interpretation of history?

S2 **00:35:07:11**

I would have thought it's essentially the linking of phenomena in what classical Marxists call the superstructure with the base, with with the economic base. I'm in this respect while I have modified and softened and made much more flexible, all sorts of things about it. I believe that the preface to the critique of political economy in some ways is what Marx himself thought he could discern after all his studies, and that is that history is to be explained in terms of the development of its modes of production, which doesn't simply mean the technology of production, but the relationships between people in the way of getting their living in a certain way.

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S1 **00:36:12:11**

You say that you've modified and softened your definition of Marxism over time. In what ways? Has it changed and how has your Marxism changed in response to the. Quite enormous social and economic changes in your lifetime.

S2 **00:36:34:00**

I would say it has changed in two ways. Firstly, by an increasing divorce between. As you might say, Marxism as a way of interpreting history and Marxism as an ideology of political commitment. We all grew up in the view that in some ways Marxism came to specific conclusions about the world which would have to be realised by certain practical steps, such as joining a working class party, Communist party or whatever it is, and that then there would be fairly automatically historical changes along certain lines. I think this is not tenable anymore. It is perfectly possible to be a Marxist. When I was young I didn't believe this, but it is perfectly possible to be a Marxist, i.e. to use the methods to answer the questions, if you like, posed by Marx and even to answer them, if you like, in his spirit, without necessarily coming to the political conclusions in specific sense that most Marxists have since done. Although it doesn't mean that I don't still find myself on the same side as that.

S1 **00:38:08:20**

Which of these conclusions do you not think that we need to come to? And what in what way have you modified? Well.

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S2 **00:38:19:00**

There is, I think, for instance, a substantial and analytical difference between Marx's analysis of the mode of evolution of capitalism, for instance, the increasing growth of contradictions, capitalism, concentration of capitalism and all the rest of it, you see, and the need for such a society to be eventually replaced and transformed. And the specific analysis that this would be the action of the industrial of the working class. At one time we believed. I'm not sure how Marx believed. Most people believe that the only way of achieving these major changes was by revolution. Now, while it seems to me absolutely absurd to suppose that it won't be primarily by revolution, because in fact, if you look at the past at this century, there have been more revolutions in it than any other century before. In fact, it can also be demonstrated that it doesn't actually have to be through a revolution. There can be equivalence to revolution. There can be what? Graham She was another Marxist called passive revolution. There can be combinations, as in case of Germany and of of revolutions, defeats in war, various other things which altogether produce something quite different from what it was before in these senses. And finally, I think there's no question about it that one has to modify one's use in, for instance, I mean, on things like base and superstructure in in the light of criticism which have been made about it. But modifying does not necessarily mean abandoning or abandoning the basic approach. And if you like, the basic program for historical research, which marks it.

S1 **00:40:23:02**

As you speak of yourself as modifying Marxism and you have in your writings, being very hostile to revisionists, revising Marxism, where do you see the distinction between modifying and revising Marxism as lying?

S3 **00:40:40:20**

Well.

Clip: HOBSBAWM ERIC_ERIC HOBSBAWM WITH PAT THA

S2 **00:40:43:24**

Let's put it like this. Take the difference between Marx and Max Weber. Yeah. It seems to me quite clear that enormous amount of what Marx wrote has to be supplemented and corrected by what people wrote on the things like class, on the role of status, on the role of all sorts of things, things like religion. Okay. But whereas you can build a general view of historic evolution and historic development, or Marx supplemented, if you like, by anything else, you can't do it on Weber, you see if you like. Here's the difference between people who allow you to develop a theory of the evolution of humanities in its multifarious and far from uni lineal manner. You see on the basis of a single coherent set of questions or a view of historical religion and those who don't. Others, it seemed to me, uh, go too far one way. I mean, I don't believe that cultural ism or almost any other theory which believes too much in the capacity of independent human initiative to change things we would all like it to be so that it isn't.

S1 **00:42:17:10**

So it's interesting at the moment that Marxism does seem to be losing its attraction to intellectuals. And in the crisis of the 1930s, it was very attractive to a number of intellectuals In the boom period of the 60s and early 70s. Again, Marxism was very attractive. But now when labor movements, the economy are going through immense crises, intellectuals do not seem so much to be finding their answers in Marxism. Why do you think this is happening?

Clip: HOBSBAWM ERIC_ERIC HOBSBAWM WITH PAT THA

S2 **00:42:51:15**

I think you've got to distinguish between Marx as a badge of being on the left or badge of revolution, which everybody has, which doesn't imply anything about Marxism and Marxism or the theory or Marxism as an interpretation of history. One reason why people are no longer as enthusiastic about Marxism Marxism is because so much of it has indeed been absorbed into the main corpus of history. If you compare almost anything that is written today with almost anything that was written 50 years ago in today's when I was a student, the difference is quite enormous.

S1 **00:43:36:23**

But another phenomenon, though, is the number of younger historians and other intellectuals who are not reactionaries, who are still somewhere on the left, but who didn't, would no longer call themselves Marxists and don't seem to find in Marxism a useful framework for thinking either about history or about the present.

Clip: HOBSBAWM ERIC_ERIC HOBSBAWM WITH PAT THA

S2 **00:43:57:09**

I wouldn't personally care whether they call themselves Marxists or not. I would. I would judge in fact their work rather than things. I am bound to say that there are younger historians who, it seems to me, have gone in for too much antiquarian and too much, if you like, neo populism. But then again, I mean, you have to judge history by the best people. You are probably right in saying that at the moment the general crisis of the left in the West is to some extent reflected in a tendency to move away from the ideology. The names which have been traditionally associated with the left. I would stress much more than this the long term rather than the series of short term fluctuations. And I would stress the fact that the transformation of most history through either Marx or Marxism or people realizing that those are the only questions which have to be asked, and to some extent the only terms in which answers have to be given. And you would be surprised how many people today, even if they don't call themselves Marxists, take this view. And one day I would hope it would no longer even be necessary to ask whether people are Marxists or not. You simply judge their work and see is it good history or isn't it good history? And if it's good history, it cannot, but to some extent reflected.

S1 **00:45:40:05**

I think that's a very good note on which to end. Thank you very much.