

Harvey Goldberg Website Audio Clip Transcriptions

The Radicalization of the Consciousness: 18 January 1971

It is the question after all, of recording for the sake of martyrdom, the dead heroes of the past you're into the question really, of basking in the product of others, for it is that radicalization of the consciousness. That to know, after all, what went in the past and to live vitally in the present and to lay hold upon the future. It is the only justification, in my view, for anything as utterly decorative as history, unless, after all, it is applied in that particular vein. This, in some mediocre way, we have collectively tried to do over this term and over other terms. And it is a very long term. And you are as exhausted as I am, I am sure. And we begin again, some of us together, others of you separately, by the time we recoup and by the time we breathe again. But it is possible, this kind of enterprise, or it is important, this kind of enterprise, only if there is a collectivity about it. From time to time this semester I have been physically and spiritually quite beaten but at times I get up again and it looks good to me. And I feel that in my incredible loneliness, the loneliness that any human being ultimately has, who knows that as many comrades as he has, he has to get up the next damn morning and face it all by himself, and really try to do something that makes the day a worthwhile day in terms of the premises upon which he runs. In all of that I have kept dangling that it is a certain kind of interchange that I have liked and that I appreciate and for that I thank you.

Rosa Luxemburg and Women's Liberation: 2 October 1970

And Rosa, an early exemplar of women's liberation. Not really. That was not her problem [laughter]. She knew what human liberation was about and she also knew most personally what those organizations were about because I tell you parenthetically that both the Second and the Third International copped out completely on the question of women's, copped out completely on the question of women's liberation. All you need do is look at the picture, after all, of the central committees of any communist party and you can't find women for the most part in those central committees. And Rosa knew all that and every once in a while as mockery she tried to pass as a man. That time, that wonderful episode in Nineteen Hundred Seven when she and her friend Clara Zetkin are out on a hike and they are supposed to go to luncheon with Kautsky and Bebel and Kautsky and Bebel are waiting for them. And Rosa and Clara Zetkin loved the outdoors they were real nature lovers and they hiked and hiked and they went up on the lake there near Kautsky's house. And they drove and they were more than two hours late and they got there and of course Kautsky and Bebel [unclear] if there ever were to move, they were worried. And they came in, Donna and Rosa, and Kautsky said, "My God we thought you had drowned on the lake or something." And Rosa said yes, and you could have written our epigraph: "the last two men of German Social Democracy are dead." [laughter] She was inclined to play that particular game because she was dealing with people who didn't understand the trouble of women in those terms nor did Lenin, parenthetically. That magnificent interchange after all between Lenin and Clara Zetkin in 1920 when Clara wrote to Lenin and said, "Look we have to have a special organization for women's liberation. We have to have a special union within the Third International for that." And then she cites the fact that Rosa before she died in Berlin hunted and hounded had this terrific idea and began to put it into effect: of organizing a revolutionary

battalion of prostitutes of Berlin. [laughter] And Lenin looked at Clara Zetkin thunderstruck. After all they had only class categories. And he said, "Working women I could understand. But prostitutes?" [laughter] And Rosa understood the problem [laughter] It is suffice to say, however, that she was an integral human being and acted like the thing she was.

The Folly of the American Commune Movement: 2 October 1970

You understand it if you understand how deceptive at times the commune movement is in the United States. How it is possible to think that there is a mode of liberation. how it is possible to think that one has found the inion of human living when in fact one is withdrawing, one is muting the pain, one is not really confronting what the elements of a society are, but one is surrounding himself with that high psychic fence of that family, of that *famille*, which is every day written small in terms of the contemporary movement.

Claptrap of Modern Political Scientists: 21 May 1971

That all of the claptrap of modern political scientists about the state as a neutral agency, about the state as an arbiter, about the state, after all, as some kind of crystallization of conflicting viewpoints, that all of that is ultimately claptrap.

Political Hypocrisy: 27 May 1971

I would say there is enough political hypocrisy in political discourse really to pollute the entire stratosphere. It consists fundamentally of policy makers in the United States who claim that fundamentally what they are doing in their destruction of a people in Vietnam and their destruction of the land in Vietnam is preserving freedom, then you understand how very frequently the basest personal and selfish motives, the very basest kind of inhumanity hides behind the flag of morality; that very frequently is the case in contemporary political discourse and it is very, very discouraging.

Responsibility of the Role of Student and Intellectual: 27 May 1971

Sometimes I get the feeling that you are maybe really too lazy, that you really don't exploit your situation adequately. That you have a lot to do, a lot of work to do and you spend too much time concerned about how weak the University is and how the cadre isn't right for you. You don't understand that you have a place here, it doesn't make any difference what anyone else is doing. Here you can learn the things you need and that's terribly important, and you must understand that you have to accept the responsibility of your role as a student and as an intellectual. Because it's no laughing matter anymore: we're at a time when human liberation is a very grave thing. And so I really leave you with just one very, very short document of thought that came again out of my friend my steel worker friend, who undertook mass interviews in 1969 and who thought so much about movements and about events and things of that kind and finally at the very end of that book, the very last thought he has was really fantastic. The last thought was about you. About how important it is for students to face up to the fact that they are students and to exploit that particular situation. 'Learning, that is the key to all the rest,' said this steelworker, 'because you know very well that the future, the future of mankind, is thought, the critical thinking that leads to action. There is thought in action continually, we must have that ever-boiling cauldron of ideas. Otherwise we die of sclerosis. In life

you have to destroy so that you can rebuild. You have to have a constant destructive criticism, outrageous and extremist, if you want, because that in the long run is constructive. And it's what they do, the young. It's the role of the student and the intellectual. It's the intellectual, and I include the student, who opens the door for us. Those students, they give us the future, they give us a vision, they bring us research. We should meet and mix more often. No, we will never pull down all the barriers, at least not for now. That's impossible. But let them continue what they have so bravely started. Those petit-bourgeois students whom everyone caricatures, they really are ready to sacrifice, to learn, to teach and to live.' [Big applause.]

Description of Pétain: 6 February 1974

Now, Pétain is not exactly a bright fresh face on the French scene. In 1940, he's 84 years old. The hero of Verdun. Now, in very good shape. Everybody comments on what a great physique Philippe Pétain had. The fact is he married at 64, a girl of 20. Fared extremely well, and, consequently, much honored for this. And he himself said, when he was 87 years old in 1943, that he was left with only two passions in life the infantry and sex. Well, if you can imagine, there is a man of extraordinary proportions here in Pétain. [laughter] Suffices to say, a little bit ga ga as a political leader. Not quite with it. A little bit tired at ministry meetings. Going to sleep every once in a while. In the midst of a discussion, for example, on marshalling tanks. This is before the armistice. Can the French really get tanks together to stop the Germans? Suddenly he bolts up and gives a long discourse on the uses of carrier pigeons. Not quite with it. [laughter]

The Mythology that Created the Cold War: 11 February 1974

And what you're talking about is that the French Communist Party disarmed its own troops, that it gave French capitalism breathing space, that it rebuilt a shattered French economy. All of that because Stalin wanted no social revolution that should disrupt or disturb his relationships with the West. And I want you to think of the enormity of that. We have all paid, the French have paid; we have paid; the Russian people have paid. For the mythology--the mythology--that Stalin wanted a revolution in Western Europe and that the communist parties were going to make it, which they never did and would not make. And for that mythology, we've had the war state and we've had aggression, and we've had Cold War, and we've lived in a state, really, of a kind of intellectual and moral paralysis. All for that fantastic, magnificent myth, it never was; it could have been. But it never was to be. And I want you to think about that and see, really, what it is you've been sold.

IBM Knows Too Much: 27 February 1974

With computers incidentally, it was a phenomenon. IBM, you know, is one of the great phenomena of the world. And nobody has been able really to unseat it. It controls over 80% of the world market in computers. And all of the defiance by European firms to try to cut into that immense IBM empire - by Phillips of the Netherlands, for example; by Siemens of Germany; by Bull of France; by Allabetti of Italy, all of it has been unsuccessful. Because, you see, IBM is terrific. Because they have servicing; and they rent you machines; and they have the software; and they replace things; and they come and they tell you how to work them and so forth. And so they're everywhere. And pretty

soon, it's my idea that you really can't get rid of IBM. Because, after all, if they put a big computer in the French Communist Party, which they do, and they have to be there in order to tell the people how to work it, then they know really what goes into the thinking of those French communist leaders. Then they go and they put those computers into the Foreign Office of the French state. And they go and they send their people there. Well, they've got it on all sides, you see. And pretty soon nobody, really, can attack IBM. Their machines know too much.

Postwar Consumer Society in France: 27 February 1974

Or think of goods. And think of that marvelous consumer society beginning to come to Western Europe. And I lived all through that in France and saw that coming. And saw it you know the way I suppose birds look at bulldozers coming towards trees. And I saw all of that consumerism coming in France. And I remember the first time I went to the household of Jules Bertoui, who was a good friend of mine, who worked at the national archives, and he said he had something magnificent to show me. And I went and he showed me this miserable dingy, tiny, little refrigerator. Well nobody had refrigerators to speak of, and I said, "Uh. C'est formidable." [laughter] What could I say, I said it's a magnificent, little refrigerator you've got there. And I opened it and saw that it was unplugged and he said, "Who can afford the electricity?" [laughter]

Oil: 21 January 1974

Now, you know oil is really fantastic. Oil is a great dream. Oil is a tremendous economic orgasm, that's why we call it a gusher.

Dignity in Eastern Europe: 4 March 1974

And I would contend to you and argue the case, from now until the end of time, that there was no freedom and dignity that was lost in Eastern Europe because there was none to begin with. And that only the dignity in Eastern Europe which began to flicker a little bit, in that period between 1945 and '7, in those two of three years, when it seemed possible that you might be able to make a peaceful transition to socialism. Only when it flickered a little bit, in that particular period, was there any kind of glimmer of hope. And that, of course, was extinguished by the entire blaze of the Cold War.

May 1968 and Karl Marx: 1 May 1974

And that in the final analysis, what May of '68 was, was a warning to anybody who would listen, that Karl Marx is alive and well, and living in every advanced capitalist society moving now from spiraling growth to stagnation. [applause]

Historian of the Usable Past: 3 May 1974

You see, I became a historian, such as it is, by accident, and it has remained accident ever since. And it has never been the kind of thing that I have cared to tell the census taker. Because it is not a professional thing with me, and it is not chronology, and it is not archaeology, and it is not computers, and it is not the memory bank, and it is not really getting on cards every little *lopin* of land in a French province in 1702. It is not that, and if anything, and if there is a model, it is to go to history the way Marx went to history, which is to go from your present crisis, to go from your present struggle, and to go back

and to find the usable past. That's all that is interesting to me. What is the usable past, what it is that is part of our social practice, what we can use after all by way of options, by way of understanding of the problems that really burn very deeply within us. And consequently to do that sort of thing is to do many things that aren't necessarily so orthodox, necessarily so respectable, that aren't even really very academic. But you have been there with that, and it's in social practice that we have a certain kind of eternity together. There is no end to this. I am very committed to you, as committed to you as you are to me. And there is something that will keep us together, and that is important, and that is very strong. [applause]

The History of Other Peoples: 16 January 1974

What I'm asking you to do about any problem of the world is to understand that the people who are involved in that problem have a history. And that, when they come upon you, in your history, it is as a moment. and that history, after all, of their own is the one that defines their problem. It was a magnificent Vietnamese, a Vietnamese who was in the Vietnamese delegation in Joissy for the North Vietnamese at Paris who took me aside and said "You know that I most criticize you Americans about, that you came into Vietnam never having been in our history, knowing nothing about our history, never having even had travelers there of note, and, c, you seek to define our destiny. Our destiny is rooted in all that we have fought for and all that we have defined by ourselves." And, so even though it is a tedious thing, it is important, after all, to go back into the history of a people and to define the problem as it emerges at that moment of contact with your own country and with its particular foreign policy.