

Michael Rogin

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Date : 30/1/1990

Tape N# : 90A, 91A

Time code :

Subject : Technology

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Well, to kill lots of people, tens or hundreds of thousands of people in this war, WW2, in this war against Japan it became...the way of doing that was to dehumanize the Japanese to, turn them into subhumans, monsters, rodents especially, gorillas, the Jap, and this was done in the movies. There were movies made for the Homefront in WW2, but also in the way in which the marines were whipped up, they wore on their caps, rodent exterminator. It was said that they had to, Tokyo had to be bombed in order to trace the Japanese back to their lair, where they bred. So a kind of genocidal rhetoric, in order to justify what is after all, the bombing of a civilian population. In which in fact in one night in the firebombing of Tokyo, a hundred thousand Japanese were killed. And a language of rodents, and the language of ants was used.

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And of course later on this became, very soon a way also to justify the mass murder in Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well. Because these things are to kill so many people in this way, technological distancing helps and then the images of the nonhumans, the combination of this themenology and the technology works together to allow you to kill countless numbers of people. But responsibility was never exactly taken for those actions, instead of that after the hot war was over, beginning of the cold war, the way in which there was a kind of generalized fear of atomic radiation, atomic war. But never as a way of taking responsibility for what the US had done during the war, but rather as a kind of more nameless science fiction sort of fear. There would be atomic mutations, there would be radiation, so a movie was made called, "Them," in the early 1950's, which was meant to be, and then it became,

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The problem became the communists, the kind of mixture of fear of atomic war, now located on the fear of communism as if the communist were going to be the ones to threaten us with atomic war. Instead of taking responsibility for what we'd done, so the atomic spies, for example the so called atomic spies are killed, and it's all located on communism. So now you have a movie called, "Them." In this movie you have giant ants, giant ants are created by an atomic, by a mutation of ants, near an atomic, a place where there's atomic testing. So, and these giant ants, which are quite terrifying in this movie are meant to be the communist society. They're collectivist, they sacrifice everything for the group, they're not individuals, and they're going to eat and devour and destroy the American population. So the they have to be traced to their brood, to their lair to be destroyed, there's a strong brood odor in this lair.

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And we have the mobilization of this incredible firepower, howitzers and fires spewing, guns into the storm drains of Los Angeles, where these ants have made their home. And so now, once again we see the rhetoric of dehumanization, the rhetoric of the ants, the rhetoric of the brood odor, combined to justify this technological destruction. So having happened once in real life against the

Japanese, it's now being re-presented in the movies as a way of whipping up a kind of anticommunist feeling during the cold war. That's how we go from WW2 to the cold war, by way of rodents in American culture.

Michael Rogin

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Antonello: Is there a tradition of dehumanizing people in the US?

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This country is basically, what I think, special, the specially unique history of the US, among the large industrial powers of the west, is that it is a settlers' society, which is formed by taking the land from Indians, Native Americans and using the labor of Black Americans as slaves, and there's a kind of heroic history of the US that involved the conquest of Indians, which creates a kind of tradition of demonology against Indians and also against Blacks, and that becomes the sort of basis of American national identity. And it becomes a..transportable to Mexicans, during the Mexican War and thereafter to Asians during the latter part of the 19th and into the 20th century and culminating in WW2. That's the sort of racial history of the US, and I thin if it were not for WW2, when it became clear that the fundamentally racist society was Nazi Germany, you would have said, I mean in 1930 if they asked you which was a more racist society, the US or Germany, the answer would have been completely clear, it would have been the US. But because of Nazism, that transformed itself, but it doesn't sort of quite let the US off the hook.

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So that history of racial demonology, which is part of American history, it may be even constitutive of American history, I think. In which finds it...so that for example, when the, when there was upset when the Americans were protesting the Japanese bombings during WW2, bombings not by the Japanese, what they said was this was a reversion to the most primitive form of savage warfare. Well, I mean, as if it to say that the Indians were the cause of this kind of barbarism. Now the Japanese were like the Indians, but the fact of the matter is that most of the barbarism in American history, in relation to the Indians was the barbarism of the White expansionists, against the Indians. But now it gets turned upside down, the barbarism becomes the Indian barbarism, and then a justification for doing barbarous thing to them.

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Antonello: Can you talk about racism in film?

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Well....I think thewhat makes..I just read an interview with Toni Morrison, the great Black Woman novelist, in which she said, what made immigrants feel like they were Americans in the town of Lyon, Ohio where she grew up, was when they could use the word nigger. Then they knew they'd become American because they joined American culture. One American culture was a culture which allowed whites, I mean there was a lot of racism against these Southern Europeans in the US, but fundamentally the aspiration of a certain kind of politician and movie maker, Woodrow Wilson say the president, DW Griffith the movie maker, was to create a melting pot, assimilation, you know, incorporate the Europeans by introducing them to and having them participate in a fundamentally racist history of the US. And that's what the most important movie ever made in America in terms of its influence and popular appeal, was "A Birth of a Nation."

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And what that movie did was, a movie which was endorsed by Woodrow Wilson, the president of the US, and based upon his own history of the US, was to say that there was a division in the US between North and South, unfortunately. That had been healed, it could be healed through the joining together of these sections, which had happened during reconstruction, to put down the menace of Black, sexual assault on women, Black power, this became the theme which united the north and south, the attack on the Blacks, and that became anything which also unite immigrants with natives, Native Americans, White Americans through their sense ofjoining against the threat of Blacks, which of course was a fantasy, there was no black threat in reconstruction in the US. So that becomes the basis of a kind of pop politics and popular culture, in the Birth of a Nation.

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And that is a continuing story in the history of American movies, if you think of the western, and the southern as two, as two maybe the two most important American movies, the western which we create a national identity through Indian warfare, and the southern in which we all ruthless, uprooted people, immigrants and mobil native White Americans all long for a plantation when Blacks were in their place. And we have movies like the jazz singer, or movies like Gone With the Wind, which celebrate the kind of black subordination in the plantation as our sort, our lost home, the home of black subordination or the danger we unite against, the danger of the black threat. Which is the form it takes in Birth of a Nation, I think that's American history, that's American popular culture, that's what it is.

Michael Rogin

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Antonello: US was colonized by Europeans, that is the basis of American culture...?

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Of course, but it has a more, it seems to me, until recently anyway, that it has more operative effect in the US, simply because American history is an interracial history. It's the history of the relations among red, black and white, and that's not really so true. The history of the British Empire, you might make some similar kind of statement, but I don't think that's probably not as

constitutive of English culture at home, England had an inherent traditional culture. What makes the US have its own culture, what makes it different from Europe, which is a big obsession and preoccupation of Americans. What makes us different from Europe, we have a racial history, and we become American through Indian extermination and through this relation to blacks, in which blacks both supply us with a threat, but also with our music, which we have by basically whites expropriating black music. That's the basis of American popular music, from Steven Foster on down through Irving Berlin and George Gershwin and Elvis Presley, black music sung by whites. So we have our what makes us special and unique is our special relation to these racial others. Which is sometimes in relation to extermination, sometimes expropriation, but very racially conscience in a way. And I think that..so it's a European, but it's Americanized through this interracial relationships.

Michael Rogin

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Antonello: ...film as a medium...?

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Well, I mean, what happens in the early history of film, you have these nickelodeans, these...the very beginning of this industry. You have little storefront nickelodeans, where immigrants are going and they're seeing kind of little comedies, a little slapstick, a little violence against authority, a lot of what they call actualities, documenteries of little things, sort of daily life. It's felt to be a big threat, it's felt that the immigrants are developing their own kind of cultural relation in movies. Movies in this technology are felt to be a threat to the sort of genteel culture, to the old American values. What happens in Birth of a Nation, and movies like that is that we try to ...we make use of this medium for ..instead of having a threat of separate classes, also the liberation of women, because women would go to these movies alone, this was felt to be a big threat because they would be (???) from their families, they may be tempted by people leaving the movies. So you had a break in families, you have class conflict, you have mass taste.

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Instead of that, movies get turned into American stories, like the story of the civil war, which is what Birth of a Nation is, and the black threat. As a way of bringing all classes and different ethnic groups together around an American knit. So movies are shifted from a kind of class and mass and sexual threat to the dominant culture, to a way of enforcing its values, a way of creating a consumer society. A way of creating a melting pot and so on. I mean I just recently seen this movie called The King of Jazz, Paul Whiteman, 1930, extraordinary. Paul Whiteman discovers jazz according to this movie, in a little cartoon beginning, Paul Whiteman was the big jazz king of 1920's which of course was a white man it was not a black man. But everybody knew blacks originated jazz, so what happens? You get a little cartoon and Paul Whiteman goes to Africa, and there he he's about to be eaten by a lion, but he takes out his violin and then he starts to play, the lion is tamed, the Africans are tamed, and so everybody becomes tamed. So he takes this sort of savage and primitive music and he tames it.

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And then we begin to ,see the movie, all these different ...basically a vaudeville show, and there are these different movies, different music, almost no blacks. The end of the movie we have the melting pot of music, and what happens is every different

ethnic group that comes to America gets its own little dancing scene. You know, Scots, Irish, and English, and Russian, and even Mexicans although they are white Mexicans, and Spanish, no Blacks, and they all make their music and then meanwhile, Paul Whiteman is stirring the melting pot. And then out of the melting pot come these incredible numbers of cowgirls, these girls in these western costumes, no Blacks. And so somehow we acknowledge that blacks are the basis of this music, but they get less out of the melting pot. They're somehow the wall, like Levi Strauss would say, but we don't even quite cook them. We know they're there in the beginning, we take their music, but then in the melting pot it's only all the white ethnic groups that become cowgirls. So we have our not only our American jazz, which is white, we have our American cowgirls, which is westerns, and somehow we acknowledge and don't acknowledge that this is a music that we've taken from blacks. Over and over again, that was a movie, that was a technicolor movie in 1930, 2 million dollars, a very big deal. In order to do this little thing about race, as Paul Whiteman did.

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Antonello: Popular music comes from afro-americans...?

00:15:53:11 Sure it goes back to Steven Foster, add American music..... Well, I mean, the most popular form of mass entertainment in the US was blackface minstrel singing, which was, white people put on blackface, and that was what was supposed to be when these people would tour the south in 1840's, they put on blackface and they do, they pretend to be blacks, everybody knows they're not. But they claim they're actually doing authentic music of Black people, of slaves, and of course they're actually doing a kind of horrifying caricature of that. But there is some, and Steven Foster wrote music from minstrel troupes, like O Suzanna, or Old Black Joe, and these become a way..this music is basically a kind of celebration of the happy slave on the plantation and vantrilliquized by whites, this becomes the base of American popular music. The minstrel show was the most popular form of entertainment, Steven Foster becomes the American composer, this is the 19th century, moved into the 20th century with ragtime and then picked up by Irving Berlin. But of course there were many Jews were involved in this, their way of Americanizing,

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Irving Berlin who'd written a tune that wasn't popular called, Yiddle on your Fiddle, Play Some Ragtime and when he read Alexanders Ragtime Band, which is a minstrel number. In Alexanders Ragtime Band there'd be a minstrel band, that is whites in blackface. And this becomes, Irving Berlin becomes a celebrity and so we have...then we have the jazz age, the 1920's, the jazz age means for America whites playing music which is ultimately derived from black, it's transformed it's not really what we would call jazz, but it becomes a popular music of the 1920's, music which is where blacks can't even play it, play this music. I mean they could play it for black clubs and some blacks get to play in white clubs, like the cotton club, where you'll have a black band playing, to segregated audience, only whites can go, and occasionally you'll have an intergrated club, the audienc, but no intergrated groups. The blacks were excluded from

being able to make money off of a music that has been expropriated from them to become the American popular music of the 1920's, that's the kind of thing that happens.

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Antonello:movies?....

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Movies are the....minstrel scene was in the 19th century, it went to Europe, went to Ireland, went to England, the popular form of American entertainment, what made America American in Europe, importantly was this blackface and minstrel singing in the 19th in the 20th century. It's movies where we have a place where the American dream is realized at a scene in Europe and the US. Well before WW2, true., you can see when you see a WW2 movie, which was very likely to beif it's set in Asia a racist movie, you could see that's obviously a political movie, it's a movie about war. But it has a, The Birth of a Nation, is a political movie, it's about the civil war and reconstruction. But even movies that don't obviously have a political theme are making a national identity. And I think movies are at least until television, the most important source of American national identity, what gives us in the 20th century.....

Michael Rogin

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Antonello: Is there a difference in the way movies are produced between WWI and WWII?

00:19:32:19P Well, they're just getting going in the first world war.

There are propaganda movies made during WW1, Griffith made one called Hearts of the World. I don't think played the same kind of role as they play in the second world war. So I mean there's an office, there's a I forget what it's called during WW1, but George Kreeel is the head of a whole propaganda agency during the war. And there are, of course I suppose, I mean I'm...I suppose the whole making visible the atrocities, which something had happened during WW1, that happens in movies, so that the stories of the horrible German atrocities, for example in the US, were to encourage

American participation in the war. And justify our vision, and certainly Hearts of the World, had that and other WW1 movies do. So there will be a sort, because you can show atrocities, you can invent them.

00:20:26:13P One of the things..., right

from the beginning of movies, by the way, when they do documentaries, they actually make up scenes. They'll do so called documentaries of the Spanish American War, the very beginning, but it's in fact made up. Or the Boer War, so you can, in the name of giving historical reality, Birth of a Nation does the same thing, it actually invents things, but has an immediacy and it carries conviction. But look at the picture you can see it is true, and that's I think true in WW1, but I just think it isn't developed, anything like this to the same extent, but it in the second world war. I would think movies are more important and maybe there were other differences, but I'm not sure..

00:21:38:16P But it becomes very real, I mean, because you see it. See,

because what you see seems much more real than what you read, it has an immediacy. The story of the US that is presented in the movies, that is the western story, the civil war story, even the Rambo story carries a kind of weight, and makes people feel that's the way it was in some way. That makes the movie the kind of...I mean, it becomes really the replacement for history, Griffith actually believed that that would be a good thing, he said that you could, instead of reading books you would now, people could go to libraries where they have movies and they could put something on the screen. You could see how it really was, he

was talking about, making obvious, these all have to be fictional because he was talking about things that had happened in the past, made movies out of those things that happened in the past. People would see that and then they would see the way it really was, but what they would actually see is somebody's fantasy about the way it really was. But of course fantasies have an immediacy and a reality which are realer than reality itself, which is complicated and contingent, and so that the effort in the movie is to really replace a real complicated and maybe unpalatable history with something that feels more real. That speaks the deep emotions and fantasies people have, and it seems to confirm them, and that's ...which isn't to say that.

00:23:17:03P I think it would be probably a mistake to simply say movies are the problem, because obviously when Griffith made Birth of a Nation, he was simply reporting on the screen the official history of the US, namely that there was this lazy black population after the war, and was assaulting southern women. All that was being written by Woodrow Wilson, it was being written (??) Phillips, it was part of the respectable Woodrow Wilson, leading political scientist, later president. Historians themselves have to bear some blame for this, it isn't just that the movies, we have the good academics and then the bad propaganda, it wasn't like that. I mean in problems which you can imagine, some from a more politically complicated and correct point of view, good movies being made, and we can all think of movies that do that. But the fact is, given a certain kind of myth about American history, racial myths in particular, movies lend themselves to the dramatization of those racial myths in a way that does seem to replace the real history by this myth.

Michael Rogin

Antonello: What about the social implications of this kind of culture?

00:24:30:00P In this book, it's not clear to me how, obviously movies are

supplemented importantly by television now and men have to talk about a slightly different feel for television, because it's in the living room and it is an intimate medium and so on. But it also isn't the life people actually live. In this new book of Studs Turkel, called, The Great Divide, when he interviews people about the way they feel about the US, and approx..in the 1980's basically. And one of the things that somebody says is that, the way to deal with a life that isn't so good, is to ..it has problems, is to live through the lives of the rich and famous. Or to live through the lives of the soap opera. One college teacher says that his students come late to class because they don't want to miss the latest episode in the soap, and they talk about the people on the soap as if they were their real friends. And he listens to conversations, and he first thinks they're talking about their friends and then he discovers they're talking about characters in soap operas. So that the kind of fictionality, the people's lives I think, when they're dominated by the visual media,

00:25:36:04P a kind of fictionality of

peoples' lives, and they're dominated by the visual media, that is very strange. And it's a kind of compensatory for their real lives, which may be, I mean for example in this

country right now, ordinary people are not better off than they were under Carter, but mythologically everyone feels better off, why, because they can identify with a fictional position, that's on a television series called The White House. And this White House makes them feel much better than that other television series called the White House did under Carter. So it isn't that their lives are any better, it's that they live a fictional life, and they identify with whatever makes that the new series, the sort of Reagan Bush series. Television series seem to work a lot better than the Carter one did, but it doesn't help out people's actual lives, certainly not ordinary Americans actual lives. Rich are better off, the poor are worse off, you identify with the rich, you feel better off, so there's some kind of de-realizing effect that the media seems to have. In order to live through that image or the simulac whatever you want to call it, for other than in terms of your own natural existence.

Michael Rogin

Antonello: What about the idea of progress?

00:27:03:20P Things are suppose to be getting better, and one of the ways they get better, we can do a lot, we have a lot more available to us, consumer goods or technological opportunities: computers, B2 bombers. I mean, it's so that simply that the ability to invent these new kinds of toys seem to make people feel good, in some way. But that's...I don't know what to say about that...I mean obviously we

could go back to where we started, this discussion, we're talking about the firebombing of Tokyo. We're talking about dropping atom bombs, we're talking about technological progress which seems to be tied up with a human regress, that is instruments of mass destruction. Ozone layer being destroyed, there's all kinds of ways in which technological progress and human regress, of which the gas chamber I suppose is the symbol of the genocide of the Jews, but also the firebombing, atom bombs and so on. So what is hard for people,

00:28:06:23P I think people think technology is progress and gives them more control and it's not at all. (???) gives control to anyone, maybe it gives more control to some people at other peoples' expenses, but it does seem to be tied up with what I would call regressive fantasy. That is, fantasies of being able to have your way at other peoples' expense. So the technology and demonology are not opposed, it's not like demonology is something primitive peoples have, and technology is something we advance civilized people have. It's more like technology and demonolgy, that's why we think of the giant ant movie, Them, we think of firebombing Tokyo, you think of the gas chambers. Technology and demonology seems to often go quite inextricably together.

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Antonello: What about science today?

00:01:15:09P I guess I would say, there's a religion of science and technology in terms of this magical power to do things. You can see that. There's a fascination with, just like a movie like, FX, which might seem to be a kind of harmless ...that's a movie about a makeup artist, that may be a little different. But the sort of thrill of observing what you can do, or maybe the best example are the science fiction movies. That is to say, Star Wars movies, the fascination with what the special effects, of what the moviemakers can do, that are quite thrilling to people, even if they know it's fantasy it's somehow also a sign of human power. What I would say is that, the Star Wars movies are interesting from that point of view because, on the one hand you have this sort of fascination with technology, and technological power and invention. And it goes, but it goes, therefore...what it means for most of us in our lives, technological power, is specialization, division of labor, narrowing of our own knowledge, we become more and more ignorant, unable to control the whole, because of the division of labor that's tied up with technology.

00:02:32:19P So I think that it has to be connected with a myth, not just a myth of science, technological power itself but some unifying myth, that will make us feel less fragmented in the face of this technological power. And so we take maybe, Raiders of the Lost Ark, would be another example, all the sort of technological skills goes into making Raiders of the Lost Ark. And also that gives Harrison Ford his advantages, so what he's able to do goes with the most primitive kind of racial nonsense about the darkskin people and the tribe, and

getting back this whatever it is, this box from these primitive racial demons. In other words again, the combination, I think the reason for that is that in some way we know that technology is not making us more powerful, so in order for us to feel unified and identify with something, we recur to the racial myth, and we make the technology serve this racial function. And that's what it does, also in Star Wars, where you get the evil empire, star wars. It's not like technology is a kind of , about a more sophisticated world view, it seems to be in the service of us against them, the evil empire versus us, that's of course Star Wars. Or the darkskinned demon versus Harrison Ford, so it seems like that helplessness, that in some way we know it's tied up with technological specialization and our own ignorance. Requires something sort of super technological, mainly this one I'm calling racial myth, to go with it.

Michael Rogin

Antonello: So science is a type of religion..?

00:04:48:24P ...it's also true of course that, it is an amazing fact about nuclear waste. And the fact that this country is going to spend, I don't even know the figures, billions and billions of dollars to deal with the waste created by the nuclear weapons and nuclear power industry, which has been simply not been dealt with. But there's some notion that we just keep, to raise fundamental questions about technological or scientific advance, is to be beknighted and primitive and superstitious. Rather than seeing that a whole

series of, I think not pure scienc, but the application of scientific discoveries and inventions to the conquest of nature. I guess this is what you would say, to technology and the service of the profit, I mean we're basically talking about that, we're talking about a.. or the expansion of large institutions. So we're talking about power and profit, and the utility of the application of science to the real world, technology to create these monsters. The monsters come back at us, only we call the monsters, you know, druglords or communists,or you know, Noriega becomes a monster instead of the B2's, or the stealth bombers that are bombing Panama. In other words, we have some anxiety I think about the monstrousness that's being created by this. But it, it isn't going to be faced directly because we worship that monster, and so therefore we demonize the other one. Something like that, it's very strange, because it's clear that in primitive societies the ordinary human being was a lot more competent to deal with his or her own existence, than we are. Even though we're supposedly a more advanced side.

Michael Rogin

Antonello: Are science and technology driving society?

00:07:14:10P I don't know the extent to which technological imperatives are to reassure the extent to which the power and profit of large organizations is the issue. I mean, these things, historically these things have grown up together, so that it's certainly possible, I mean I think it's possible to

imagine a humane use of technological and scientific invention. I'm not sure that it's an imperative of, I don't know what I think about that, whether it's an imperative of the method, or whether it's because of the organization of science and technology, in these large centralized organizations. Which are fundamental when you're dealing with power and profit. It is the way in which a maybe because of research money, I mean, you could begin to think about why these things go together, in terms of the amount of money that's required. In terms of careers of people and so on, but really it's fundamentally western capitalism that has generated this stuff. It's hard to separate the capitalism part and the multinational corporation part, and the military industrial state part from the, out from the actual sort of science and technology part.

Michael Rogin

Antonello: What do you think will happen with this new detent,?

00:08:31:16P Because it's clear, whatever is driving this, whether it's simply some imperative of technological expansion like the rule of things, for whether it's capitalism like some other people think? Something is driving them, and the cold war was an extremely useful device for corporations and for the state especially, the military industrial state. And it's remarkable to me how slow any change has been in spite of the fact that..if since there never really was, in the way to justify the military industrial complex, a Russian threat, in my opinion never was of that sort, what everyone

might want to say about the Soviet Union. But nevertheless, even if you believe there was, it truly isn't now, and yet the hanging on, but can they hang on forever to that threat. And then the question, what will be the unfortunately for the military industrial complex, there's a lot of unfinished business. Like the cleaning up of ...with hundreds of billions of dollars still remain to be spent in nuclear and cold war related, I think. But also it's pretty clear that the drug war which has its racial side, will be an important substitute for..

00:09:43:24P ..it's hard to see what will be the sort of organizing substitute. Because it's hard to justify the kind of military buildup anyway, in this country the US, not to mention NATO. It's hard to justify that kind of organization and that kind of money to fight drugs in Latin America and Asia, I don't think we can quite generate the same budget. But you can generate the same demonology but it isn't an expensive problem, so it's hard to see, I think we're in a period where a certain amount of desperation among the ruling elites about what will take the place, what will justify this massive structure, this research product apparatus. I don't know what will happen, I don't think the system is exactly fragile, but I think it's the first time since,...since in the case of the US, what ended the depression was WW2 and nothing else, and that is to say, this country is never successfully operated at a peace time economy since the depression, we're talking about fifty years, ...it's not clear that it can.

Michael Rogin

Antonello: Do you think there are opportunities for people to fight back against this structure?

00:10:56:18 Well if you believe as I always did, that the cold war was a kind of freezing moment in American politics. That it shut off opportunities because of this Russian threat, you would think this would be a more liberating moment, but it doesn't feel that way in the US. And I think the reason it doesn't feel that way, is partly because the great moment of breakthrough was one that succeeded in ending the war in Viet Nam, but failed to really transform American politics, and ultimately led to the election of Reagan. I'm talking about the 60's. When the thing was confronted head on, the Viet Nam war, the one time in American politics when the fundamentally anti-communist basis effort was challenged successfully, was the years let's say 65- 75, culminating in the Nixon resignation. But that didn't work, it didn't last beyond that, you got the election of Reagan. That was the period when there really seemed to be a lot of possibilities, I think that sort of decade.

00:11:52:16P Now I think what

the, at least the short run consequence of the, of what's happening, the liberation of eastern Europe, the breakdown of the Soviet Empire, has been a kind of self congratulation on the part of the US. The feeling that we won, a feeling which makes or Bush has the highest popularity ratings of any president at this time as well as in history, it's remarkable. So that we can do Panama, and they can't even do Chekoslovakia, it sort of goes like that. I mean, a kind of

chauvinism in the US now, which is as bad as it's ever been, a refusal to think of these things. So at the moment it doesn't feel like a moment of opportunity, a moment of breakthrough. With the cold war end, has liberated possibilities, but it's not clear how long that can last, I don't know how long. It going to be possible to sustain for example the military budget, even Cheney and Bush want to sustain. So maybe that in the next few years, that this, some possibilities will really open up, but it's certainly not what's happened in the short run.

Michael Rogin

Antonello: ...military industrial complex built up after WWII...spinoffs?

00:13:41:17 Yes, yes, yes, yes, ...No or they will decline, but it may be that the sort of military basis, the military is important just as given a statement to the nation. Giving a state a function, but it may be that it will really be the multinational corporation and, I mean, you could imagine how an economic decline of the US, that the reason that opportunities will not open up is because in the US, it's because the US is in a period of deep economic decline, faced with Europe and Japanese competition. And that, that that sort of pressure, that means a sort of constriction. What's happened to the working class in the US, the poor, has a lot to do with international competition. And but that's no (??) of hope for revitalization of American politics. Are hampered by the competitive decline of the US in relation to Europe and Japan. So this is probably not a

period, the one we look to the US for. And the end of the cold war isn't really as important as the economic competition, which the US does badly.

Michael Rogin

Antonello:

00:15:23:13P Well we know, I mean look, that when Woodrow Wilson was president, and he had The Birth of a Nation shown in the White House, he said it was like writing history with lightning. He endorsed the movie, he was tremendously excited about it. Here's this sort of founding movie of Hollywood, it is a movie that is endorsed by the White House, the possibilities are seen by Wilson. So that's the beginning, we know that when you get a motion producers association and Hollywood begins to sort of police itself. The man who runs that is Will Hayes, who goes from being the chairman of the republican party, in the Harding campaign in 1920, to be in Hardings cabinets, running the motion picture. We know that during WW2, Washington is intervening. I don't think that Washington interventions in WW2 are so crucial, Hollywood does it on its own, it doesn't need Washington to.. You know Washington intervened during the Mccarthy period and the blacklist, and so on, it didn't really need to so much because the motion picture producers policed themselves in ways that the government generally approved of. So it is clear that the government has seen its potential, has been involved, and sometimes that's been more important than other times, but isn't that essential. And then finally we

know that Hollywood produced the most important president we've had since Roosevelt, Reagan. So but clearly eventhough, it wasn't that the government put him in there, on the contrary, (??) put him into the government. But the sort of links between Hollywood and Washington, you know, are sort of brought home by Reagans election, pretty important.

Michael Rogin

Antonello:

00:17:04:06P Because what is politics about, it's about entertainment, it's about how do we win support. Bush gets support because he can do the following things. We have a Jesse Jackson campaign, and Jackson is somehow exciting people, and possibly breaking down racial barriers, and what Bush can do with his way of working commercial is replace Jackson by Willie Horton. And now instead of Jackson as the big black face in the campaign, which has one set of meanings, Willie Horton is the big black face. So now we have Willie Horton, the man who raped a woman and brutalized her husband, because Dukakis let him out on parole and he becomes, American politics gets organized around the rape of a white woman by a black man, but that's a very familiar story, that's the story of Birth of a Nation. So that Birth of a Nation gives us that story, this political movie in 1915, Bush makes a movie called the Horton commercial, which is played over and over again, the furlough commercial. Now we have another political movie that gets Bush elected

president, among other things, but it's very important. On the basis of racial polarization, frighten people about blacks, and so that people are voting on the basis of Hollywood or the movies, in this case the Horton movies. Just like Reagan they voted for because of his appearance on television. So that's what American politics is now, it's the politics of entertainment. Entertainment is the, (???) of scaring people through the visual media, becomes the basis of gaining, holding power in the US for these presidents.

00:19:14:21P Her feeling was, that look there was some working class resistance to this stuff that was going on...

Michael Rogin

Antonello:

00:19:43:24P

There are individuals, the ruling class is not a completely unified, there's people looking for a possibility to making money. This film's been making a lot of money for Warner Brothers it turns out, I don't think we need...also the film does leave...from the point of view of my teaching assistant, who's been a union organizer, she said look, there was a lot of working class opposition to this. There was working class agitation, but what you see is the way you feel that these people are helpless, so in a way, the movie may actually not be politically a particularly liberating thing. As in a sense of the power of General Motors you get

from in the absence ...the union is finished, the union can't object, the union looks ridiculous, and they deserve to look ridiculous. But not all workers maybe deserve to be treated as passive victims. So maybe it isn't quite as threatening a movie politically as you might think, that's what I guess she would say. I don't know how a decision like that is made. She's just a white, young woman who spent some years as a union organizer before she went back to graduate school.

Michael Rogin

Antonello:

00:20:52:09P

She knows that about the union but she does think, and I think she is right, that there were an especially black militants, I know the UAW was badly split, and there were militants who were very much opposed to the cooperation of GM, and the sort of refusal to fight the closing ...and they're not shown at all. And that's what she was objecting to.

Antonello:

00:21:27:01P So when they finally, when the guy has been justifying GM, the lobbyist gets fired at the end, that's where you get your pleasure from. Look what happened to him too, but that's hardly going to do us any good.

entic music of Black people, of slaves, and of course

the state especially, the military industrial state. And

it's remarkable to me been in spite

of the fact that..,if since there never really was, in the

way billions of dollars still remain to be spent in nuclear and

cold war related, I think. But also it's pretty clear that

the drug war which has its racial side, will be an important

substitute for..

00:09:43:24P ..it's hard to see what will be the sort of

organizing substitue. Because it's hard to justify the kind

of military buildup anyway, in this country the US, not to