

RG: Okay, let's go, okay, I will start, madam, by asking you for your name and your date and place of birth, please.

HB: So Hélène Bleskine, I was born in Sannois, it is next to Argenteuil in the Paris suburbs, August 26, 1946

RG: And can you tell me something about your family, from, c what kind of family, what relationship did you have with the family at that time, when you were young?

HB: Well, my father is of Russian origin, he was born in Saint Petersburg

RG: Oh yes?

HB: So in 1922 and he's still there

RG: Oh yeah?

HB: My mother too, so they are always together, my father was an electronics engineer

RG: Yes

HB: So there is a whole part so on my father's side are Russian immigrants

RG: Yes, but they came to France to what moment ?

HB: In the 1920s after the Revolution... Russian

RG: They were white Russians?

HB: No

RG: No?

HB: No, no

RG: Red Russians?

HB: But it is precisely the subject of one of the books that I wrote (laughter from RG and HB)

RG: But why did they come to France?

HB: Well, they fled there, there was one, my great-grandfather I believe was a Russian diplomat so under the Tsar, so there was still, and he, in 14 he was in Berlin...

RG: D ' agreement

HB: He came back. After that his son had nevertheless gone to the Cadet School so he still has a whole part of the family who immigrated to the United States and France. And my grandmother, they say she was a Bolshevik, that's how she managed to get her family out in the 1920s. But all that is the, the shadows and the lights in families

RG: Yes okay

HB: I can not verify, I tried, I went to Russia, but I did not find a trail and they are, so my grandmother came to the end of the 20s when his son was already there with the rest of the family and with his own grandmother so my great grandmother, my great grandfather who was a Russian diplomat

RG: Yes

HB: in, in Vienna and in Berlin, he had married a German woman

RG: Ah yes, okay

HB: So my, my, my great-grandmother was called Asseyev, finally by marrying a Russian

RG: Yes

HB: Her name was Asseyev and so...

RG: And the name of the diplomat great-grandfather?

HB: Asseyev

RG: Asseyev always, yes

HB: There you go

RG: Okay yes

HB: And after that, because I asked my father the question, "what did they do during the war? », I said but if she was German, how could she manage here, why she was not arrested in the camps

RG: Yes

HB: before in 39 when they arrested all the Germans

RG: Yes

HB: And he said no to me because her name was Asseyev

RG: Ah yes, okay

HB: she was, she was Russian what, she was a German but who had become Russian

RG: D ' agreement

HB: So they were here as Russian my father and with the Nansen passport

RG: Ok

HB: Russian refugees and therefore my father naturalized after the war

RG: After the second war

HB: After the second war

RG: Ok... yes of course

HB: And so...

RG: And so he worked in France as an engineer or...

HB: he worked in France all his life for, he worked at Olivetti, the Italian company

RG : Yes

HB: So he was a computer engineer and my parents, my mother is French, of Norman origin

RG: Oh yes, ok

HB: He married my mother so in, I think, in the years - they were very young - in the years, they must have been twenty years old, so they were both born in 22, that makes 40. And they had five children, so that's it for ... So there is, I work , I reflect on this history of, family memories and...

RG: Yes

HB: I wrote a book called Russian Pages

RG: Yes

HB: where I reflect on this presence of this Russian grandmother that I I liked it a lot and which was full of mystery, which told us nothing at all

RG: Ah good

HB: and who would have been Bolshevik, here is

RG: Oh yes, okay, great, so you think that this, this somewhat exotic past influenced you a little?

HB: Yes of course

RG: How?

HB: Well, I don't know there was still a, not a myth of the Russian revolution because my grandmother said all the time that the worst thing that had happened to Russia was the Bolsheviks. then

RG: Yes

HB: So there was, I don't know I imagined in what I'm writing now...

RG: Yes

HB: would she have been Menshevik, would she have been, because that she was a diplomat's daughter so...

RG: Yes

HB: things we know, even my father doesn't know, she was hired at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs because she spoke several languages

RG: Yes

HB: after the revolution, at the Commissariat aux Affaires Étrangères and therefore she would have thanks to it could have left his mother, his brothers and sisters etc. But she never told, my father was very small so he doesn't know anymore

RG: Ok

HB: So after we said that there was a whole myth about, as her mother was German, she would have been spy, she would be, well, a whole thing about my grandmother that fascinates me

RG: Yes absolutely

HB: who is the subject of the book that I have not published called Pages Russes, which is a kind of meditation on history and, and, and how it could have influenced my involvement in the 68s? what, I don't know

RG: Yes, no but it's very interesting, we can come back to it but as regards the studies, how did it go?

HB: at that time we lived, my father worked throughout the region of eastern France so all the years of high school, we lived in Nancy

RG: oh yes okay

HB: and there were, you know, there were these, before 68 so, 65 something like that, I wanted to do theater so I had prepared the competition for the conservatory of Nancy and that's where I am stumbled upon the Nancy university theater where there was Jacques Lang

RG: Ah yes

HB: who was in the process of creating the international theater festival and so it is also there that I ... my life took a turn. Let's say that I started to do theater with the Nancy University theater troupe and to participate in all, the creation of this theater festival which was extraordinary

RG: Yes

HB: in those years

RG: Yes

HB: where there was the Bread and Puppet, the Campesino, it was all the time of the fight against the war in Vietnam

RG: Yes

HB: and therefore there was also a lot of political expression

RG: Ok

HB: in the theater, and that's where I have, that I had to reveal myself to myself as that artist rather my destiny, so I did not study

RG: So you, you...

HB: I went to the baccalaureate but after I, I did theater and then we came to Paris and I returned to the University of the Théâtre des Nations. It was an extremely lively time for the theater and so 68 arrived there and so afterwards I did street theater which

RG: Ok

HB: That's, that's how it was done , by the theater influenced by all these movements as I tell you from the theater of Bread and Puppet, the Campesino, of...

RG: Who was an American troop, right?

HB: Yes all these big American troops

RG: American yes

HB: and so what I can add is that my brothers before 68, my older brothers, my big brothers

RG: Yes

HB: were in the Communist Party and they were militants against the Algerian war and that many of their friends at the time of the creation of the UJC (ml) you must have known

RG: yes, yes

HB: have uh become Maoists. But I was outside all this because I was still too young but at the same time I was fascinated by this radicalism into which my brothers did not enter

RG: Were they , older brothers?

HB: Yes

RG: They were part of ...

HB: They weren't at the UJC (ml), they remained communists

RG: They remained outright communists

HB: Yes

RG: But in...

HB: in Nancy there was a whole movement like that with all their friends and they were...

RG: It was the Union of Communist Students

HB: Yes

RG: or the Communist Party

HB: No the Union of Communist Students

RG: Ok

HB: It was all the students yes... but thus already before 68 I was attracted by the basic Vietnam committees which were rather, where I had friends and which I...

RG: Still in Nancy?

HB: Still in...

RG: Or in Paris now?

HB: Still in Nancy and then in Paris because just in, at the end of 67 I went to do an internship at Planchon in Villeurbanne

RG: Yes

HB: and therefore, theater and therefore there was, I returned to Paris, I had a friend who was in the basic Vietnam committee and so I got closer but I was not in an organization, I was in...

RG: Okay, okay

HB: It was right a movement...

RG: The movement yes

HB: A movement and in the theater, at the University of the Theaters of Nations which was installed in Châtelet above the Théâtre de la Ville. There were a lot of radical theater currents, of what we called radical theater at the time, that is to say very influenced by this American radical theater.

RG: But radical in what sense?

HB: But big troops who played in, in, who were militants in the United States

RG: Yes

HB: against the Vietnam war

RG: Ok

HB: and so we were fascinated by this

RG: Absolutely

HB: this theater

RG: Do you have comrades from that time who, who, with whom you remained in the, in, in your career of, engaged if you will, is it?

HB: No after there were the, there were a lot in this international university of the Theaters of Nations

RG: Yes

HB: there were a lot of, South Americans

RG: Yes

HB: there were also directors like Victor Garcia, it's a whole era of theater that I would have to dive back into

RG: Yes

HB: who gave a lot of, people went back to Latin America and then I have totally lost sight of them and sometimes thirty years later there is someone who calls me saying "do you remember" ... But because I took at that time, I created a troop theater called the, I was uh, what do you call that, pawn supervisor

RG: Yes

HB: in a high school in the suburbs in Clamart and so I created the high school theater troupe in the theater, in the high school and so we went to play in the suburbs, in the, in the ... We created a troupe also we were doing with one, one, I was at, well it's a bit complicated to explain, but that's after 68

RG: Yes

HB: I was on the Action Committee of the 14th

RG: Yes

HB: and so there I met Monique Frydman who is a great painter today and, we created a troupe, she made huge puppets and so we launched into the, the street theater

RG: D '

HB agreement : And so we have, I put on pieces in this high school, I would have to, I didn't even keep all the articles that had on that time

RG: Yes

HB: and so the, that's how the Maoist organization, the spontex Maos, Vive La Révolution

RG: Yes

HB: who was very cultural after 68 in the whole panel of leftism came to find us so that we could go playing Renault Flins

RG: Oh yes, okay

HB: because there was the, the scandal of the recruitment trafficking, the attack on the town hall of Meulan

RG: Yes

HB: and that's how I joined a group which was Vive La Révolution

RG: Ok

HB: and after that I established myself when there was the establishment, that we were inhabited ...

RG: Yes that's what you were telling in your...

HB: Here is

RG: Your, your book, is not it...

HB: There, then

RG: it is, it is who in particular who looked for you, made you, you, you, integrated you into this group which...

HB: Well the...

RG: Long live the Revolution

HB: Well the, the , la, Vive La Révolution which was this orgran... this movement because it was not really an organization

RG: Yes

HB: The story of Vive La Révolution but here we have to go back, that is to say c 'is at the time of the bursting of the UJC (ml)

RG: Yes

HB: This famous UJC (ml) of the Ulm Street School

RG: Yes

HB: who exploded and, and who gave several groups including the Proletarian Left

RG: Yes

HB: Vive La Révolution with Roland Castro, Tiennot Grumbach finally our cadres as we said of, of the VLR movement which was much more in the line of the March 22 movement

RG: Yes

HB: than in the policy line of La Cause du Peuple

RG: Yes

HB: There was an extraordinary divergence between them

RG: Yes I see

HB: So...

RG: And according to you, what was the idea or what were the main ideas or the, the main vision of Vive La Révolution, what kind of revolution were they, what were they thinking about?

HB: We were very, we would have to start again in all the texts of the newspaper Tout

RG: Yes

HB: which had at the time, it was still an experiment in the democracy of the word

RG: Yes

HB: agitation, spontaneity, women, the youth movement, music, finally of everything, something much more alive and joyful than the organization of La Cause du Peuple which was very avant-garde precisely in this...

RG: Yes

HB: Completely military, it is...

RG: So a cultural revolution

HB: Here is

RG: more than a revolution, as well as a political revolution

HB: Here is

RG: Yes

HB: and besides, well, it would not have occurred to me to go join La Cause du Peuple yet I was in places where they were there, because it was so military and filled with guys and there were hardly any women. Well yes, there was but let's say even in those years one ... But Roland Castro would talk to you about that a thousand times better than me

RG: Yes

HB: Because we were all the same as grassroots militants so we was not, it was after that I started to think about it all so uh, there was still one could say, me sometimes I say the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks, the revolutionary socialists, in fact there was, that replayed like that is always replayed in all revolutions

RG: Absolutely yes

HB: So there was the, the, the military vision of the engagement and a much more cultural vision of the engagement in which I was

RG: Ok

HB: and which I also experienced by the theater

RG: Yes, okay

HB: in those years

RG: So you are, you came to Flins, it was in...

HB: Sixty...

RG: It was in 70?

HB: Yes here I believe in 70

RG: Yes... and in your book you, you are, you say that you were in Gargenville

HB: Yes it is a small town next to Flins

RG: And how it was daily life spent there at the time?

HB: Well it was still, we were still in the spirit of May because...

RG: Yes

HB: Until 75, not even in 75 maybe, because my book came out in 75 so there it was already the, the end, so let's say it was post 68, just after 68 so there was still a kind of utopian, great freedom

RG: Yes

HB: In everything, everything, during those years, there was this kind, this desire for this, to bridge the gap

RG: Yes

HB: and therefore to go next to the factories or in the factories or in the countryside, well if you study all that...

RG: Yes, yes

HB: there was a whole movement of rapprochement, was it a form of populism, Russian style finally. I don't take it, I take the word populism

RG: Yes

HB: not in the negative sense but rather mystical to get closer to the people or to be in the people or, in the sense of the Russian populists

RG: Okay, no I understand

HB: des, from the end of the 19th century

RG: Wasn't it difficult to have relations with, with workers in these, in these factories? How was it, because there were certain maos who had established themselves as workers but here we are talking about the Base Ouvrière, I never understood what it was exactly what the Base Ouvrière in Flins was, how it happened ?

HB: But it was a, it was a very flexible organization, it was not at all precisely one, a group, it was not even... (the doorbell rings)

RG: Pe will pause if you want... .so...

HB: I don't know you hear, have you checked it works?

RG: Yes I, yes it is finally working, I'm sure, I'm almost certain we'll see later ... so to come back to, to, to Flins and the base

HB: Well it was, the Base Ouvrière was a, an organi, it was not even an organization it was, we were in an idea of movement, to set in motion

RG: Yes

HB: So it was very large

RG: Yes

HB: That is to say There were, people from the CFDT, we are, we were much more in touch with the trade unionists of the CFDT than with the CGT because, if I remember correctly in those years

RG: Yes

HB: The CGT obviously hated the sixty, the...

RG: The leftists

HB: The leftists

RG: Yes

HB: So there was, it was also the beginning of the end of, because, we were anti, when we say we were anti-authoritarian, we were anti-totalitarian but, but we didn't know it at the time because we hadn't read Hannah Arendt yet. But it was a movement, all of France was on the move anyway

RG: Yes, yes, okay

HB: So everyone, moreover, was on the move so even what had happened in Czechoslovakia at that time there, the arrival of the Russian tanks so there was really something of communism which, which in which we were not

RG: Okay

HB: We were not only not in communism, but we, we when we were, we were not anti-communism but we spoke of a communism of freedom

RG: Anti-Stalinist

HB: Anti-Stalinist but we were not at the same time Trotskyists

RG: No

HB: who had been anti-Stalinists for 50 years so

RG: Yes

, ok HB: We were, why we were Maos, spontaneous Maos, it was a vision of the cultural revolution which obviously had nothing to do with what was happening in China, it was completely fantastical, it was the cultural revolution

RG: Yes

HB: So it was a somewhat evangelical vision

RG: Absolutely

HB: friendship, fraternity as we have today, everyone talks about it again but why we made a commune in Gargenville, it was the kibbutz tendency of, of

RG: Yes, you called yourself that the time a commune?

HB: Well, we didn't call that a municipality either

RG: or a community?

HB: A community yes we said it but we were not at all attached to the definition of something

RG: Yes

HB: So what interested us was direct democracy in front of, talking...

RG: Yes

HB: That c 'was the direct result of the great happiness that in the summer of May 68, to speak in the streets, to speak at the exit of the factories, to speak, to speak

RG: So that happened at the exit of the factories, in the cafes ...

HB: Here, take the floor

RG: Yes

HB: And that, for example, we were also very inspired by the American movements obviously

RG: Yes

HB: The movements of Lotta Continua, we had even gone to Italy

RG: Ah yes

HB: but their...

RG: When?

HB: in those years. We went to a Lotta Continua congress in, in Genoa I believe, therefore, where there were all the Italians. They settled in the factories and they discussed and all that, it was in relation to the, to The Cause of the People who were already clandestine and military

RG: Yes

HB: and who did not show themselves, we were told that you had to show

yourself RG: Okay

HB: You had to be there, you had to discuss, create, it was direct democracy, it's a vision, but it was all very spontaneous so there was no vision, there was no

RG dogma : Ok

HB: There wasn't a political line

RG: Ok

HB: It was open and so we had the impression of, of, of transforming, of, of transforming our relationship with children, to the parents all that, to discuss, to try that, to live that...

RG: Yes, because...

HB: Now in hindsight I call it the kibbutz tendency of

RG: There, ok, okay

HB: May trend, May kibbutz 68

RG: Because there was also a criticism of the bourgeois family where you also wanted to revolutionize the relationships between individuals, right?

HB: Yes we certainly hoped to, from fashionable, I tell you it was really the fashion of friendship

RG: Yes

HB: and of sharing

RG: Yes

HB: So something, it was not so much, it wasn't 'There wasn't so much at the Base Ouvrière in, in the memory that I have of it, because it's still...

RG: Yes

HB: We have bursts of memory and then we transform and all that but, we, I guess when you read L'Espoir Gravé

RG: Yes absolutely

HB: We are more immersed in it than when I tell myself

RG: Yes okay

HB: And there wasn't so much either ... there wasn't the drug, there wasn't the sexual revolution in the sense that it was said afterwards that it was a sexual revolution. where everyone sleeps with everyone

RG: Wasn't that it?

HB: It wasn't that either, it was more. There was indeed a lot of freedom, it was the praise of love but at the same time in this community we experienced the limits, that's why after that it also exploded, it's that is to say that love is fundamentally exclusive

RG: Yes

HB: We cannot be, we cannot, we cannot live, well that jealousy excites for example

RG: Yes okay

HB: So that's it, it's an intimate experience, it's like a sentimental education and we were very young, so we had, well we wanted to fight jealousy precisely in the sense of having more fraternal relations between women

RG: Yes

HB: to no longer be dependent on the desire of men, etc., etc., but I do not remember very well what could be said at that time

RG: But how was it going to the point of view, where you lived was a big house or, at, at?

HB: Gargenville

RG: Gargenville, how was this community going?

HB: Well I think you will find it better in Engraved Hope

RG: Yes

HB: I have forgotten a little now

RG: No, okay

HB: It was... it was a house with several rooms, it seems to me that we had a common pot of money

RG: Yes

HB: We found a job at the beginning

RG: Ah yes

HB: after that 'we were completely spotted by the General Information so we could not find any more work even through the temporary boxes

RG: Yes

HB: So we found for example a moment when we were hired at the Renault factory in the canteen

RG: Yes

HB: It didn't last long because we were immediately denounced, so afterwards we were quite strangled economically because we could find more work

RG: Yes, okay, okay

HB: There was, there was a woman with children so we all took care of her, I'm telling you kibbutz tendency

RG: Yes

HB: There were love stories in the house but also outside the house, there were also men in the house, our lovers

RG: Yes

HB: So it was not a house of women, but there was a core of female friends, well...

RG: Which ones in particular?

HB: Well, those who, who, we were very friends what, we were, it was completely, there was no organization

RG: No, no, no you quote

HB: So did not even do a nucleus in the sense

RG: Yes okay

HB: It's just elective affinities or I don't know

RG: Yes okay, okay... but do you, do you?

HB: There was a great friendship

RG: Okay

HB: and so it's true that, for example, there was another house in the Base Ouvrière

RG: Yes

HB: which was in Mantes-la-Jolie

RG: Yes

HB: where there was Tiennot Grumbach, where there was had, this was the core if we can say but it was formal, it was more men

RG: Ok

HB: So ... but it was not a women's house either, it was not a men's house either, so it was...

RG: And in everyday life there was a kind of, traditional working vision, well the women were cooking and all that or not it was shared...

HB: No, no that was shared

RG: Everything was shared

HB: Everything was shared yes, we listened to a lot of music, we discussed and there were a lot of people who came to see us because it was a time when there were also other groups like activists of Rouge, militants of the CFDT so it was a, a kind of home of, and then we did actions, we got up in the morning, we went to distribute leaflets, but I don't remember, maybe someone kept all the ...

RG: No agree

HB: the memory of that

RG: All right, okay

HB: Tiennot Grumbach, for example, who has become a great lawyer

RG: Yes, yes

HB: he has kept all the memory of this period

RG: Yes

HB: so there you can have elements

RG: Yes, yes absolutely, no but your, your point of view is also important

HB: I have a little the, the memory of a great sincerity, of a lot of, a lot of affection what, of, a kind of momentum, a little theatrical, it was a little theatrical, but since I was in the...

RG: What do you mean, yes?

HB: in, the representation of, that is to say that we lived in broad daylight

RG: Yes

HB: and we, and we gave ourselves a spectacle in the background since the house was open

RG: Yes, okay

HB: It seems to me that this is what I'm telling in the book

RG: Yes absolutely and...

HB: It's good it's not, we...

RG: More precisely you, you speak of, of the theater of ...

HB: To set an example

RG: You brought in the Théâtre du Soleil

HB: So here is also the Théâtre du Soleil that came. We also organized concerts, I took care of one, a theater with children in Mantes-la-Jolie

RG: Yes

HB: There was the cultural aspect which was very important but at the same time it was 'was a time when the best of the best it was all the same to get hired at the factory

RG: Ok

HB: But, but we couldn't do it at one point

RG: Ok

HB: except actually what La Cause du Peuple was doing, which was illegal

RG: Okay

HB: and it was hired as workers so could not be spotted as a leftist

RG: Okay

HB: So which was completely impossible for us, even if we managed at one point to work even a month in a job

RG: Yes

HB: But it was impossible because we were totally registered and spotted

RG : Ok

HB: So we couldn't get hired in the factories, our group

RG: And with regard to the, the, the people...

HB: There was a program you have, you can look there. There is France Culture which did three shows on not long ago, which it called the established ones

RG: Ah yes ok

HB: and they came to see me. So I explained that it was almost a cultural establishment. It is not in the sense of established that have managed to be established for years

RG Yes

HB: Activists of La Cause du Peuple or, Trotskyists or, workers' utopia or whatever

RG: Yes

HB: All the groups which are really very workers who were in the factory but who weren't spotted as leftist activists

RG: Okay, and in your dealings with locals. Were there women, local women, were there workers, immigrants? How did that happen ?

HB: Well it was very, I tell you, it was, it was not an organization

RG: No

HB: So we were not preaching among the people to create an organization

RG: Yes

HB: C 'was a current, a movement

RG: Yes, okay

HB: The Base Ouvrière, obviously there was the whole side of getting closer to the workers' world, but there was not, besides why Flins, because precisely the CGT was not very powerful so there was this whole concept if I remember well

RG: Yes

HB: what VLR was developing

RG: Yes

HB: in the newspaper Tout

RG: Tout oui

HB: who was "wild France", that is to say the one which is not yet enrolled in the unions

RG: Yes agree

HB: like the CGT, not wild in the er sense but which has not yet, which has not yet passed into the mold of the CGT, therefore which is more free, but it is is completely spontaneous movement

RG: Yes

HB: de, of those years

RG: Yes

HB: from 68, with that spirit, afterwards you can always come back to it by finding yourself, I looked for literary connections with the surrealists and all that but

RG: Yes, yes

HB: It was ... don't forget that at the time all of France was uh I can't find the word, not soaked up but everyone lived on this idea of the counter-culture

RG: Yes

HB: We were in the counter-culture, but also in the United States, in England I suppose, that we were going to create a counter-culture, which moreover excited, this counter-culture existed

RG: So for example what does the counter-culture consist of, the music, some books...

HB: The music, the way of dressing, of going, we all dressed at fleas, we recycled what has become now, that I see my children who call it "vintage", we did, we were already vintage at the time against obviously, there was also the criticism of the consumer society well all that, all those years

RG: Yes ok

HB: I have a memory that, there were a lot of, joyful

RG: Yes

HB: Even if afterwards we started to suffer because the, the noose tightened and then also we grew in our heads and therefore we saw clearly that it is, the end. I can not remember it except that I was going directly in analysis here

RG: Ah good

HB: But then, but I know

RG: In which year that?

HB: 73-74, I remember...

RG: It was less common at the time

HB: I don't even remember how it all worked out, so I don't know anymore so it must have been painful

RG: Yes absolutely fact

HB: The, the way it all came together, I don't even remember how I wrote the Engraved Hope, it's still extraordinary

RG: Absolutely

HB: I don't know

RG: But that, it is from, of your analysis of yourself

HB: It must have been a momentum

RG: Yes

HB: Finally I do not see the moment when I put myself on a date to write it

RG: Oh good

HB: It's very strange

RG: Very strange

HB: And so I wrote...

RG: And why you did it...

HB: I must have had a...

RG: Do you have it in 73, something like that?

HB: Yes certainly, I must have had an inner demand as I wrote it but I no longer remember but in addition, obviously when we get older we lose our memory but we still have shards of memories

RG: Yes completely, completely

HB: So I went into analysis with Lacan in addition, well I tell it very rarely

RG: Yes

HB: that I was with Lacan

RG: Yes, Lacan himself

HB: Lacan himself, because I, Roland Castro who was in analysis with Lacan told me "go to Lacan". And so I don't know, I didn't know who Lacan was, but he was very interested in the people, the sixty-eighters precisely, those who had lived this experience

RG: Because his own daughter was sixty-eight, right?

HB: Yes maybe so he...

RG: And his, his stepson, Miller, right?

HB: But it wasn't, I think at the time he was not yet her stepson

RG: Okay, okay

HB: I'm not sure

RG: Okay

HB: Although his stepson was really into the absolutely hard line of the movement

RG: Yes

HB: The Cause of the People was the hard trend, well me that's what I think but

RG: Yes, yes absolutely

HB: Bolshevik of the movement (laughter from RG and HB) the Bolsheviks of the movement but I, I'm kidding with Olivier Rolin from ... We did some, there was also another program that was made at France Culture a few years ago based on a play by Michel Deutch which is called La Disparue finally a scenario

RG: Yes

HB: and La Disparue is the revolution and therefore where Blandine Masson who directed this program had invited all these figures like that, Olivier Rolin and then me where she made me read a few pages of Hope Engraved

RG: Yes

HB: So all these currents of those years and where we didn't, we didn't, we didn't come back to that time and to the, well, the radicalism of La Cause du Peuple which was when even a very violent movement, which we weren't at the time and what we had to go through because they were laughing at us at the time

RG: Oh good?

HB: They told us that we were not real revolutionaries so

RG: spontex

HB: Here is

RG: Because I did not understand, I did not understand the term spontex very well, it is something to clean, it's...

HB: No, sponta, sponta, it was actually a joke, it was spontaneity

RG: Spontaneity yes okay, okay

HB: But that we must not institutionalize spontaneity

RG: Yes, but when it did...

HB: It's life

RG: You tell in your book how it ended. And did you at the time - I don't know if you can rethink that a little bit - do you, do you think it was a failure from the point of view, well the revolution didn't have not taken place, whether it is a political or cultural revolution. You tried something that didn't, that somehow failed or...

HB: No I didn't experience it like that

RG: No

HB: although now I'm writing about it on the question of 'failure but it is rather in relation to the general failure of communism and therefore the history of communism. So after I went to Russia and thought a lot about the issue of totalitarianism

RG: Yes

HB: And that it's an obsession with me, even with the totalitarian part that we have in ourselves

RG: Yes

HB: to want, when we are, when we want to change the world or change man etc. So I went back to the thirties, the radicalism of the thirties, I'm talking about political radicality not aesthetic radicality but it is...

RG: Yes

HB: I was very interested in the Writers' Congress of 1935, the way including the break between the surrealists and the, Aragon and the question of fellow travelers and everything that happened in Russia afterwards with all the great poets like Mandelstam and Pasternak and Tsvetaeva and all that so

RG: Yes

HB: It is, this is it, the fruit of my mediations. But I think it's precisely because of this radicalism if we can say the years 68 or the question of the revolution, uh at the same time there is the Carnation Revolution, there were revolutions that took place without

RG violence ; Yes

HB: The fall of the Berlin Wall

RG: Yes ok

HB: So for me it's in the spirit, my mind of 68 would be what...

RG: Ok... so you went to Russia at what moment ?

HB: In the 90s

RG: Yes, after, after the fall of...

HB: Yes

RG: of the wall

HB: But for, what did you ask me about 68?

RG: No, but if, if you think that the revolution of, had been a failure ...

HB: Oh yes on the question of failure ...

RG: from your point of view

HB: The, is it, it is something that I reflect on, the happy side, I will give you texts that I wrote on, the fraternal and happy side of May 68, that it is rather the experience of the tragic

RG: Yes

HB: C it is not the failure but it is the experience of the tragic, we say it, I don't remember who said that, the tragic is the party fallout what

RG: Yes

HB: That is to say it is rather the tragic in history what

RG: Yes ok

HB: That's more my experience, not the failure is the experience of the tragic

RG: Ok

HB: in the idea of the revolution and afterwards that's why I thought about all this a lot but that doesn't take anything away. For example, I have always been surprised that the Trotskyists are still so numerous in France

RG: Yes

HB: that there are so many small Trotskyist groups, that's something that surprises me

RG: Yes, why?

HB: then, because at the same time they are linked to anti-Stalinism

RG: Yes

HB: and at the same time they are in a terrible language and they never carried the criticism of the revolution to the end Russian

RG: Yes they are....

HB: Because if there had been...

RG: They have a totalitarian side, you mean

HB: Here is

RG: Yes

HB: That is to say, they have not gone to the end of the thought, what is totalitarian thought and I think that we have not even all arrived there even at understand all that

RG: Yes

HB: But why in France there were the September massacres in 1793? So these are things we can't, the revolution, what is the revolution, so it's, me, it's stuff that lives in me so I don't know how we can ...

RG: Yes

HB: It's a questioning, let's say. May 68 opened a kind of questioning to me about the history

RG: Yes

HB: but also sure, I think that we cannot do without that... to understand what revolution is, at the same time we could say to ourselves, "would I have become fair?" a progressive or a humanist or a, or am I afraid of conflicts, of violence all that? »I haven't solved it anymore in analysis but it is...

RG: No

HB: The analysis led me to write that's all

RG: Okay, but you had already written the Engraved Hope or that is...

HB: It was in these, at that moment because I remember that I gave it to Lacan this book

RG: Ok

HB: And Lacan took it and then threw up laughing and he said "what now"

RG: Oh good, why?

HB: Well it was, 'what are you going to do now? Are you going to continue writing?
»Well, that's how I interpreted it

RG: Yes

HB: But afterwards he told me that it was very good, he showed me the...

RG: He read it anyway

HB : yes since he told me, the next time he told me, "that's good". So it's also good because he has an article in Le Monde, and I said but it was not an extraordinary article. He told me that didn't matter: the importance is that we talk about it, that was, that was...

RG: It was good, well, what was the reception of the book by your comrades at the same time? and a wider audience?

HB: It was very, very good ... it worked very, very well

RG: Yes

HB: Well, I only have great criticism

RG: Yes

HB: On the other hand, my comrades, no

RG: No?

HB: I think there was a sense of capturing the story. So I think that I was very angry with me, although I, well I told it in the romantic mode, but I think it's always like that

RG: Yes

HB: From what moment someone tells the story perhaps. This story from May 68 is so plural

RG: Yes

HB: So gigantic so no one can pick up or

RG: Alright

HB: this story, I told this story, I did not receive ... Finally if my very close friends liked my book but I do not know how it was perceived. I know, I knew there were a lot of people who didn't like the way I was telling the story but I think everyone is difficult, that's why I'm telling you that that remains a guilty memory for me, I don't know

RG: Guilty?

HB: Yes, for having written this book which I, which I cannot read. Maybe there are like that as we said at the time of the vibrations you know bad ones, I do not know...

RG: Your friends had the feeling to be betrayed, or criticized, or what?

HB: Maybe in this book I revealed things that we don't want to say or I don't know, I'm telling you "I", we don't have to, well I thought that... that there was the big question of those years, after 68 when one was a "us", a "us", a "we", and that afterwards one had to think about, the "I". So rediscovering your "I", so the relationship between the "we", the "we", the "I" is still present

RG: Yes

HB: How is it, how is it, how is it articulated the "I", The "we", the "we"? For example sometimes I hear people, well even intellectuals who say "at that time, we were"

RG: Yes

HB: And I want to say no, we cannot say "we", because even the "us" is painful

RG: Yes

HB: Because it is, "we" are always in the process of, the "I", the "we". Where was there "I", or was there a whole, it's true that it's, it's very complicated what happens between

RG beings : Ah yes, okay

HB: Finally the space of democracy, Hannah Arendt who says it's between, politics is "between", so what happens "between", because the "we", at the same time I am very afraid of the "us"

RG: Yes

HB: The Russian Revolution, "ours" and all those who were not "ours" we have them, we then sends to the gulag

RG: Here is

HB: So it is, it is very difficult

RG: Yes

HB: The “we”, the “I”,...

RG: Yes, okay

HB: So, and speaking on behalf of oneself, it's also very complicated because, that I, I, I think I wrote in another book that hell is not other people, it's self. So, all that is how, what makes the link, at what moment, I am very afraid of the great unanimity

RG: Yes

HB: So, even all the big meetings that there are this moment, I don't know it's, besides it's funny that it comes back to this question of 68... 68 it was multiple

RG: Yes ok

HB: It's not a thing, it's...

RG : Yes I understand

HB: totally multiple, so now there are multiple memories, as men are multiple

RG: Okay

HB: So there is no, there are all kinds of memories and all kinds of insinuations. What interests me is literature and poetry really

RG: So after you started your analysis, you came back to 68 or your past, or your childhood or...

HB: but no I wrote the other books, then *Dérive Gauche*

RG: yes

HB: Passwords and then Châtelet-les-Halles, I have always had this, this taste of, friendship and effervescence, and movement that

RG: Yeah, so I'm definitely going to read those books

HB: So those years ago, that is, all of that,...

RG: What about the theater?

HB: The theater afterwards I no longer did theater at all, no, I did not come back to the theater...

RG: Because?

HB: Once I came back, once I, I don't know, because I myself, I didn't see myself as creating a theater troupe where it was, yet there was high school theater, but I think I have, I have...

RG: Who was after, after?

HB: Yes, that I have, ah no before, before Flins

RG: Before Flins, the high school theater

HB: And of, I did not see myself as an Ariane Mnouchkine or, that was my, I was not capable of, of, of directing something. So it was, the theater was in the same vein as 68, bursts of, moments, moments of theater but I could not stand ... I even believe that I remained totally, I did not never became a professional writer. Sometimes I say to myself, it's the, the profession, I, I, it's something, I always said in those years but I think that it remains with me, I do not identify myself, do not identify with its function

RG: Yes

HB: So all that I did after which was to bring worlds closer together, like architecture, literature

RG: Yes, yes

HB: Create a link, because after all, as we walk in Paris, we have in the documentary world, in the world of cinema, in the world of literature, all of that is extremely separate

RG: Yes

HB: I have always traveled between these worlds in fact, because I worked for a long time with Frédéric Rossif, I wrote the texts for these films

RG: Yes

HB: So all that I love everything that makes a bridge what , all that

RG: This is

HB: creates a link

RG: Okay

HB: between the worlds. So maybe it's, why it's that, maybe it's what I have left of May 68, the passage between the worlds

RG: There, well it's very interesting, yes

HB: Maybe that's the strongest left over from that memory, and, and I've got

RG: Listening to you...

HB: and everything I've done

RG: Yes

HB: things like these books and everything is always creating, creating, well it's an imaginary republic at the bottom

RG: that's it

HB: a republic of imaginary letters, to create links between these things. And I never managed to identify with a writing career or a career of whatever. So I always do, or when I am invited to writing workshops in architecture schools in the city, I make them discover the great texts of, Flâneur, the great Flâneur of Baudelaire reviewed by Benjamin, poetry, the way of living in the city. Is it also there, something of a bit of Situationist memory, a bit of surrealist memory all that? So it is, the, I am rather inhabited like that

RG: But at the time in 68-70-71, it was possible to make the connection between these different imaginations and after you say something broke, crumbled right?

HB: well in the years, after in the 80s, the, all all, all these, but maybe it's still like that

RG: yes

HB: that I am a total idealist not to imagine as embrace careers. I don't know, I think there is a kind of, 68 anyway, something like a sublimation of marginality

RG: Yes, in what sense?

HB: Well, what we called the counterculture

RG: Yes

HB: Marginality, that is to say of not being able to join the career

RG: Yes, yes

HB: So after everyone did careers in all fields is normal for all generations...

RG: Except you

HB: Except in, in the XIXth century, Rastignac all that, the world perpetually re-fabricates all that. So I could wonder about the poet's position, maybe I dreamed of myself like that, but to stay on the sidelines a little and maybe, unconsciously, it's a form of loyalty to 68 I don't know not

RG: So what do you think of, of those people we talked about before the interview who have become journalists, politicians, filmmakers all that, well who have if you want to succeed in some kind of public or media career?

HB: in any case there was not really, I have already written it once, I wrote a letter to Le Monde because there was an article by Bertrand Poireau-Delpech which said that every sixty -huitards had been in the soup when Mitterrand was elected. And I think it's wrong to say that, well I wrote like that, I couldn't find the text for you, I wrote it to Le Monde in any case, it appeared, I think that at share Serge July, Brice Lalonde, and still anyway he made a very large newspaper, where there was a great freedom of thought

RG: Yes

HB: So Bernard Kouchner created Médecins du Monde, Médecins sans Frontières. So we don't have, we don't have, it's not positions of power I mean, it's creations of...

RG: Yes

HB: of thought

RG: Yes

HB: The ecology that has been pursued, the right to the city and all that, these were ideas that were already germinating in the 1960s. But the, for example Mitterrand said that we were morons, we people of 68, I do not think that people really of 68 were in power

RG: No agree

HB: I do not understand this criticism

RG : No

HB: I even think that the, even if the Socialist Party, Mitterrand was elected because there was all this movement to the left

RG: Yes

HB: and therefore the left could have been in power

RG: Yes

HB: It's thanks to those 60s and 70s, but I don't see, well me around me for example I don't see someone who has been in positions of power

RG: Ok

HB: Then there are all those who became artists, they became artists so

RG: Ok

HB: It's, it's great artists sometimes so it's, I don't see , I do not understand this criticism when we say the, "68 was in power", no

RG: No agree

HB: Me I, there was the current newspaper, good for major newspapers like that, but why would- it was forbidden to make newspapers and?

RG: Yes absolutely

HB: It's true

RG: So you, you...

HB: But I don't feel, I just came from it, I heard a guy at France Culture there

RG: Yes

HB: who comes from " write a book where he says that for him the 80s are the counter-revolution

RG: Yes

HB: So I would tend to think that these 70s were completely obscured, including by the Socialist Party. So it's now that it comes back by, by Nicolas Sarkozy but those 70s have remained very much buried all the same.

RG: Yes, and yet people, people are interested in it from time to time. You have, you yourself say that sometimes the, the journalists, well historians like me, they come to talk about it

HB: Yes because it is, it is very enigmatic

RG: Yes

HB: These 70s are very enigmatic

RG: Yes

HB: So there is both 68, everything, everything that happened after 68, I think at the same time 68 was the beginning of the end of the Communist Party in France

RG: Yes, Yes

HB: So it played a very, very important role

RG: Yes

HB: After what we did most, people started to read very good Solzhenitsyn, so the emergence of this question of the France de Vichy

RG: Yes, yes

HB: We have lived in there for 20 years, the France of Vichy and the Goulag, it was all the great books that we have read

RG: Yes

HB: Robert Antelme all that, c 'That's when we started to read this

RG: Ok

HB: Primo Lévi, so I think the question of totalitarianism occupied our thoughts for 20 years, while...

RG: You have discovered tota, totalitarianism by Solzhenitsyn or by Arendt or both?

HB: Both

RG: Both

HB: But more, later it's in the 90s Hannah Arendt

RG: Oh yes, yes

HB: But it's true that, it's even, I could almost say it's now that, that I am a little obsessed with these questions also of, of ... of the engagement ... well it's the eternal question of the engagement, to what the engagement, what does that mean the commitment

RG: Yes

HB: Me, I am making a commitment today for literature and the space of poetry, poetry as experience therefore. That's what fascinates me, when I can transmit something that's it, literature and poetry so

RG: Do you write poetry?

HB: No, but it doesn't matter I can transmit...

RG: Yes, okay

HB: from, to read. So it is, the 70s are completely repressed and when they, when they reappear it is always under, they are always instrumentalised by the policy, therefore because the Socialist Party is not free from all this

RG: No d '

HB agreement : They also criticized a lot 68 at certain times, therefore, the 70s. Why we did not become for example in France totalitarian as in Germany and as in Italy, why our radicalism stopped, all the world has self-dissolved itself, all movements

RG: Yes

HB: self-dissolved

RG: You are not, you have not fallen into violence, that's it

HB: Well yes, why even the most violent like La Cause du Peuple has also dissolved itself

RG: Yes

HB: Why? psychoanalysis has helped us ... because we have, we imagine May 68 could have fallen into a violence as in Italy and as, as in Germany

RG: So you think that most of the sixty-eight people have opted for psychoanalysis rather than for violence?

HB: Oh no, I don't do any generality, no generality (RG laughter), each one...

RG: Yes

HB: I think that Lacan was a great influence in those years

RG: Yes

HB: and that it was a great anti-totalitarian thinker

RG: Yes

HB: I wrote it, I really mean it, so...

RG: What was his message to you, or his...

HB: No, the truth is not, is not all, well is not...

RG: Yes

HB: is, it is, it is the relation to the truth, it is this question of the relation to the truth

RG: Yes

HB: The multiple truth therefore in, and the truth only slanders itself. And in addition we see all these magnificent sentences that he always says, that he said in those years which have a great resonance of, of the relationship with the truth... of accepting the other. Finally there was also everything, I think there was a lot of, of,

the appearance of Levinas all that, that has a lot, the question of the other, what, what Rosa Luxembourg had previously asked as a question of freedom for those who think otherwise

RG: Yes, yes

HB: So the, the, all those years, well after, the history of ideas in France I don't know. But I have always felt that in the extreme left movements which remained like the Trotskyists or even the alterglobalists, they had not gone to the end of this question of totalitarianism and that is why we always had an extreme left like that in France

RG: Yes, okay

HB: that there is not elsewhere

RG: They did not rethink it like you

HB: Well they do not have, they are in these avant-garde patterns

RG : Yes

HB: It means the avant-gardes who hold the truth therefore, it is something which, which is in gestation in all the thought anyway today thus it is, I am not original in saying that eh

RG: No absolutely, but some who have made this criticism of totalitarianism have ended up being downright right

HB: Yes

RG: People like Glucksmann for example

HB: Yes

RG: Is that not your case?

HB: No

RG: No

HB: No, well anyway Glucksmann was extremely ambivalent

RG: Yes, how's that?

HB: Well because, for example, he always looked at Russia through the prism of the gulag

RG: Yes

HB: but he never looked at Russia through the prism of Pasternak, Tsvetaeva and all this internal moral resistance that there was in Russia, the great works of, of Platonov and of all these extraordinary writers who have rendered what life in the Soviet Union could be like in immense works

RG: Yes

HB: So he, he has, and then, he, he was part of this hard trend of May 68

RG: Yes

HB: The GP

RG: Yes

HB: and, and it is precisely this, some of this movement that finds itself in this organization, moreover because it is an organization, is found behind Sarkozy, that's what is strange

RG : Yes

HB: well I'm telling you because I feel it like that but it's not even detected like that yet. Why part of 68 took power in psychoanalysis after Lacan, always transforming Lacan's psychoanalysis into a truth, one and indivisible

RG: Yes

HB: to such an extent that it even created tons of groups

RG: Yes

HB: That why we find them, it's, it's, it's, it's... I don't know them, a pissed off, something like that maybe, well obviously I have a more libertarian spirit

RG: Yes

HB: If we were looking for filiations, but I believe it is also related to the question of the elite

RG: Yes

HB: which arises a lot, that is to say what is the elite, therefore the figure of the intellectual, the figure of the elite, so these people defend an idea of the elite which is for me in, in the right line of, of, of desires, of political companions, oddly

RG: yes

HB: this strange thing to have criticized Stalinism so much and then to find oneself advised by the prince but it's a bit like the neo-conservatives in the United States, that's the relationship to power

RG: Yes absolutely, absolutely

HB: But it is an extreme minority, it is a few, but it's...

RG: Who make noise

HB: who make noise and this, because after there was the appearance of the media intellectual etc., etc., so I do not come to me, I am not a media intellectual, I do not know not even if I am an intellectual because I, all that, I am completely self-taught if we can say

RG: Yes

HB: Even if I am invited to do writing workshops in universities

RG: Yes, yes

HB: on the question of the city and...

RG: Yes

HB: and to live, to inhabit it, as we inhabit the world today but, it is...

RG: You will remain libertarian

HB: But I am not either in a libertarian group

RG: No, not in a group but you have a libertarian spirit rather, I do not know if it is said

HB: But that is to say that the relationship to authority for me can only be moral

RG : Yes

HB: Moral authority is a big discussion about authority

RG: Yes

HB: Authority, what is moral authority today?

RG: Yes

HB: That's a big question for me

RG: So what is it?

HB: Well, moral authority at that moment is concern for the other, it is always effectively fraternity, injustice which, that I cannot stand what... And therefore also in

the literature of myself. ask questions about... For years we have only been interested in evil in man, generalizing evil, man is bad

RG: Yes

HB: so we come to the Benevolent, the book that has had so much success, so we will take a closer look at men, I am almost Tolstoyan at this level that is to say that man is also capable of being resistant

RG: Yes

HB: During war, man is also capable of being good so here it is, when we say that we appear as a, a stupid Rousseauist but...

RG: No

HB: Me, it's things which, which me, which upsets me, so I cannot fit into this, this logic even at the level of literature, of, which makes the success of all these books, of go ... Well not everyone was a Nazi, and man does not necessarily carry this calamity within him, even to be. There are even people who will say that if we were caught in this situation, we would have done the same thing

RG: Yes

HB: and that me no I cannot

RG: No

HB: I cannot, by the way the English resisted Nazism in an extraordinary way during the war

RG: It was not the same thing

HB: Yes, well there were also indeed, Nazi currents during the war

RG: Yes

HB: in England but...

RG: Yes, absolutely

HB: It's, it's interesting because it's questions, for example I reread Malraux's L'Espoir

RG: Yes

HB: It's a very good book, L'Espoir by Malraux. But that's the whole question of the years, of the war in Spain, so another story of Stalinism which has, which has liquidated all those who thought otherwise what, that's why I've been passionate about Russia ever since. ...

RG: Here is

HB: for 10 years where I have tried a lot, a lot, well I went to Russia, I was working on a portrait of Boris Pasternak for television, there for example France Culture asked me to do, and I did, a, a 10-episode fiction of Pasternak's correspondence between Pasternak and Tsvetaeva, so all of that excites me

RG: Ok

HB: These, these...

RG: It's to find a...

HB: these great Russian moral consciousnesses that I find, when you even read Doctor Zhivago for me it's a, a huge book where it asks the questions that we were able to ask ourselves after May 68

RG: Yes

HB: So what is this enigma of totalitarian regimes?

RG: And I find that it also goes back to your, the story of your family

HB: Yes then what is it, who was my grandmother but that I don't know... the shadows and the lights in families... but there you have it, you have everything you want...

RG: I think we can stop, Hélène Bleskine, thank you very much for your testimony.