



THE
ANTI CHOMSKY
READER

PETER COLLIER AND
DAVID HOROWITZ, EDITORS

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INTRODUCTION

Peter Collier

The dust jacket of *Hegemony or Survival*, Noam Chomsky's attack on U.S. foreign policy and the elites who supposedly control it, calls the author "the world's foremost intellectual activist." Normally such a statement could be dismissed as publisher's hyperbole, but this claim about Chomsky exists in an echo chamber of similar sentiments. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Chomsky is "the most cited living author" and ranks just below Plato and Sigmund Freud among the most cited authors of all time. While acknowledging that he is reviled in some quarters for his ferocious anti-Americanism and cavalier relationship with the factual record, a recent *New Yorker* profile calls Chomsky "one of the greatest minds of the 20th century."

Even this rapturous praise does not quite capture the extent of the Chomsky phenomenon. At this point in his career, Chomsky is more a cult figure—"the L. Ron Hubbard of the New Left," one writer called him—than a writer or even a theorist. (Most of his "books" are pamphlets in disguise, collections of speeches, or interviews strung together, as in the case of the best-selling *9-11*, which was assembled by e-mail with the assistance of his protégés.) Rock groups such as Rage Against the Machine and Pearl Jam promote Chomsky at their concerts the way the Beatles once promoted the Guru Maharaji, solemnly reading excerpts from his work between sets and urging their followers to read him too.

Manufacturing Consent, a documentary adapted from a Chomsky book of the same title, has achieved the status of an underground classic in university film festivals. And at the climactic moment in the Academy Award–winning *Good Will Hunting*, the genius-janitor played by Matt Damon vanquishes the incorrect thinking of a group of sophomoric college students with a fiery speech quoting Chomsky on the illicit nature of American power.

The devotion of Chomsky’s followers is summarized by radio producer David Barsamian, who describes the master’s effulgence in openly religious terms: “He is for many of us our rabbi, our preacher, our Rinpoche, our sensei.”

But unlike other cult figures, Chomsky’s power is not commanded by the authority of charisma or the electricity of revelation. His speeches are flat and fatwa-like, hermetically sealed by syllogism and self-reference against the oxygen of disagreement. His power comes not from his person, but from the fact that he, more than any other contemporary public intellectual, gives an authentic voice to the hatred of America that has been an enduring fact of our national scene since the mid-1960s. It is a voice that also is easily distinguished from others with similar commitments. Chomsky is interested in a few “truths” that are always “beyond dispute.” His citations often loop back solipsistically to his own works. He argues with such imperious disregard for other explanations that he often seems to be talking to himself: “The so-called War on Terror is pure hypocrisy, virtually without exception. Can anybody understand that? No, they can’t understand it.”

The *Anti-Chomsky Reader* does not seek to deprogram members of the Chomsky cult. But it does offer a response and an antidote to the millions of words Noam Chomsky has emitted over the last thirty-five years, and tries to explain to those who do not yet accept him as their Rinpoche what he has stood for during that time. Some of the ideas on his intellectual curriculum vitae that are discussed in the following pages—his defense of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, for example, and his support of Holocaust revisionism—may surprise those who know Chomsky only generally as a bilious critic of U.S. foreign policy. Other

commitments of his—for instance, his claim that the United States as a world power is continuing the program of Nazi Germany, and his fierce hatred of Israel—will, unfortunately, be more familiar. But either way, as Chomskyism continues to grow at home and abroad, it is clearly time for a reckoning.



Any work about Chomsky must begin with linguistics, the field he remade so thoroughly by his scholarly work of the late 1950s that he was often compared to Einstein and other paradigm shifters. Those who admire this achievement but not his politics are at pains to explain what they take to be a disjunction between his work in linguistics and his sociopolitical ideas. They see the former as so brilliant and compelling as to be unarguable—in all, a massive scientific achievement—and the latter as so venomous and counterfactual as to be emotionally disturbing. In their contribution to this volume, Paul Postal and Robert Levine, linguists who have known and worked with Chomsky, take the view that the two aspects of his life's work in fact manifest the *same* key properties: “a deep disregard of, and contempt for, the truth; a monumental disdain for standards of inquiry; a relentless strain of self-promotion; notable descents into incoherence; and a penchant for verbally abusing those who disagree with him.”

Whatever flaws have appeared retroactively, Chomsky's work in linguistics allowed him to make a transition from the university to the public arena in the mid-1960s and be taken seriously as a critic of the war in Vietnam. In a series of influential articles that appeared in the *New York Review of Books* and other publications and in his *American Power and the New Mandarins*, he distinguished himself by the cold intellectual ferocity of his attacks on American policy. Although a generation older than most members of the New Left, he shared their eagerness to romanticize the Third World. Finding Hanoi to be a radical version of the Eternal City, Chomsky traveled there with other revolutionary tourists to make speeches of solidarity with the Communists (whose heroism he believed revealed “the capabilities of the human spirit and human will”) and to sing songs and declaim poems.

But Chomsky was unlike other antiwar intellectuals in that he never made a cerebral return to Vietnam to rethink the consequences of the Communist takeover there. As Stephen Morris shows in “Whitewashing Dictatorship in Communist Vietnam and Cambodia,” Hanoi has remained for him a place of the radical heart, where unblemished goodness continues to engage the absolute evil of American aggression in a freeze-frame death struggle. He continued to serve the Vietnamese revolution after Hanoi, under the guise of “reeducation,” sent hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese to Hanoi’s gulag, relocated up to two million to the New Economic Zones (a jungle version of its Soviet patron’s Siberia), and forced tens of thousands of “boat people” to take their chances on the open sea. Confronted with evidence of these homicidal policies, Chomsky, as Morris points out, rushed to defend Hanoi: “For him there were only two questions to be asked—whose interests were being served by all these ‘negative reports,’ and how could these reports be disproved?”

Morris shows that Chomsky took exactly the same stance when word of the Khmer Rouge’s killing fields arrived in the West. Unlike some of his comrades who had joined him in regarding Pol Pot as a revolutionary hero and who had second thoughts as the bodies accumulated, Chomsky held fast to the radical party line, initially trying to minimize the deaths in Cambodia (“a few thousand”) and comparing those killed to the collaborators who were executed by resistance movements in Europe at the end of World War II. Writing in *The Nation* in 1977, Chomsky practiced his own version of killing the messenger by savagely attacking the witnesses, some of them fellow leftists, who brought out news from Phnom Penh of the developing holocaust. In 1980, when it was no longer possible to deny that some 2 million of Cambodia’s 7.8 million people had indeed perished at the hands of the Khmer Rouge, Chomsky, still in denial about the Communist rulers, suggested that Cambodia’s problems might have been caused by a failed rice crop. As late as 1988, when the skulls were piled too high to be ignored any longer, he returned to the subject and insisted that while bad things may have happened in Cambodia, the United States was to blame.

While he was establishing himself as a permanent scourge

of American foreign policy, Chomsky occasionally called himself an “anarchist socialist” (which any linguist might be expected to identify as an oxymoron). But aside from genuflections in the direction of Mao’s totalitarian China (which he referred to as a “relatively just” and “livable” society) and Castro’s Cuban gulag (which he regards as more sinned against than sinning) and his more passionate engagements with Vietnam and Cambodia, he has not been much interested in the theory or practice of other countries, socialist or otherwise. His only real subject—David Horowitz is right to call it an “obsession”—is America and its “grand strategy of world domination.” In 1967, Chomsky wrote that America “needed a kind of denazification,” and the Third Reich has provided him with his central metaphor ever since.

Chomsky has denounced every president from Wilson and FDR to Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton as the front men in “four year dictatorships” by a ruling elite. In his view, the United States, led by a series of lesser Hitlers, picked up where the Nazis left off after they were defeated (primarily by the Soviets) in 1945. Thus, a case could be made for impeaching every president since World War II because “they’ve all been either outright war criminals or involved in serious war crimes.” In their efforts to prevent a Communist takeover in Latin America, JFK and LBJ in particular used “the methods of Heinrich Himmler’s execution squads.”

As Thomas Nichols shows in “Chomsky and the Cold War,” the long conflict with the Soviets and the fact that it was fought out primarily in the Third World allowed Chomsky to elaborate on his analogy with the Nazis and “to spin his master narrative on the evils of American power.” The Soviet dictatorship was not only “morally equivalent” to democratic America in Chomsky’s view, but actually better because it was less powerful. The chief sin of Stalinism in his eyes was not the murder of millions but giving socialism a bad name. Nichols opens a window onto Chomsky’s rage in 1990 when the Berlin Wall came down, Communism collapsed and the USSR disintegrated—all events that were previously undreamt of in his philosophy: “The world that emerged was the complete reverse of what Chomsky and his cult followers had hoped for and expected during a quarter-century

of insistence that the United States was morally indistinguishable from the USSR.”

Many of the other critics of the war in Vietnam whom Chomsky had stood with during the 1960s had moved on by the 1990s. He remained behind, a bitter-ender operating what sometimes seemed to be an intellectual version of a one-man government-in-exile from his office at MIT and frequently complaining of being ignored and marginalized. In *Manufacturing Consent*, he explained how such a thing could happen: the American media, reflecting the views of the corporate elites who control them, made sure that ideas such as his remained on the fringe. As Eli Lehrer shows in “A Kept Press and a Manipulated People,” Chomsky’s “propaganda model” of the media is a key to his worldview, explaining how the American people are so suffocated by false consciousness that they willingly accede to the horrors perpetrated in their name. Lehrer writes, “[Chomsky believes] they are either too stupid to understand how the media manipulates every aspect of their lives or complicit pawns who ‘goosestep’ to every whim of the dictatorial rich.”

Chomsky has rigorously argued against personal motive in discussing policy, preferring to see elected officials, for instance, as robotic actors in a Marxoid drama of sinister ruling classes and falsely conscious masses. For the most part, he has kept his own personality out of his work too, cultivating a guru-like persona that communicates as easily by tape recordings as by public appearances. The one exception involves the Jews and Israel. Here there is an unacknowledged and perhaps unassimilated personal content that is hard to ignore.

In “Chomsky’s War against Israel,” Paul Bogdanor discusses the “astonishing displays of polemical rage and vindictiveness” in Chomsky’s long hate affair with Israel, a country he regards as playing the role of Little Satan to the American Great Satan and functioning strategically as an “offshore military and technology base for the United States.” His animus toward Israel is so great—Chomsky sees it as a terror state “with points of similarity” to the Third Reich—that it seems to call for a psychological explanation, especially given the fact that his father, an immigrant from the Ukraine, was a Hebrew teacher; his mother wrote

children's stories about the heroism of Jews trying to form a new country in the face of Arab hatred; and Chomsky himself was once a member of a pro-Israel youth group.

Even more bizarre is Chomsky's involvement with neo-Nazis and Holocaust revisionism. This strange and disturbing saga began in 1980 with Chomsky's support of Robert Faurisson, a rancorous French anti-Semite who was fired by the University of Lyon for his hate-filled screeds. ("The alleged Hitlerite gas chambers and the alleged genocide of the Jews form one and the same historical lie.") Chomsky defended Faurisson as an "apolitical liberal" whose work was based on "extensive historical research" and said that he saw in it "no hint of anti-Semitic implications" at all. In his carefully documented "Chomsky and Holocaust Denial," Werner Cohn follows Chomsky into this murky world, locating him at the intersection where his loathing of Israel and his "paroxysm of self-hatred" meet Faurisson and the neo-Nazi groups that Chomsky allowed to print his books and to promote them alongside the works of Joseph Goebbels.



In the post-9/11 political ferment, Chomsky's reputation, which had suffered because of his support of Pol Pot and his dalliance with figures like Faurisson, is on the upswing again. His following has grown, particularly in Europe and Asia, where his views have helped inform an inchoate anti-Americanism, and on the university campus, where divesting from Israel (a cause he has led) and attacks against the War on Terror are *de rigueur*. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, which had for the most part ignored the dozens of Chomsky books that had emerged like clones over the previous few years, both treated his recent *Hegemony or Survival* as a significant work, with Pulitzer Prize winner Samantha Power writing in the *Times* that Chomsky's work was "sobering and instructive."

On 9/12 and for several days afterward, Chomsky discussed the attack on America, without particular regret, as an understandable response to a longstanding grievance. His audience was far broader than the true believers who had followed him in

his *idées fixes* about East Timor. Those whom Chomsky now rallied were as high as he was on *schadenfreude* and as committed to the idea that America had it coming for a history of misdeeds stretching back at least to 1812, the last time foreigners attacked the homeland (but really to 1492, where the nightmare began, according to another Chomsky tract, *Year 501: The Conquest Continues*).

While bodies were still being pulled out of the rubble of the Twin Towers, Chomsky was charging that the U.S. military response against the terrorists would immediately lead to a “silent genocide” through the wintertime starvation of three or four million Afghans. But as David Horowitz and Ronald Radosh show, nothing remotely resembling Chomsky’s scenario actually happened. Relatively few civilian deaths occurred in the U.S. offensive against the Taliban, and of those, virtually none were the result of starvation. But Chomsky, obeying the first law of the Left—never look back—offered no explanations and certainly no apologies for being so wrong. After going to Pakistan to repeat his calumnies in the weeks after the attack on the Twin Towers, he continued to spread his Big Lie around the world by a slender collection entitled *9-11* that was translated into 23 languages and published in 26 countries. And when asked about his lie, Chomsky simply denied that he had ever made it.

The events of 9/11 seem to have drawn Chomsky back to the center of things from the margins where he has resided since Vietnam. His comments about the United States and what it faces in an age of terror have been marked by a sense of anticipation. In one of his condemnations of the war in Iraq, for instance (he opposed the effort to remove Saddam’s regime, one of those actually existing fascisms that get crowded out of his worldview by the imaginary fascism of America), Chomsky noted offhandedly that “sometimes violence does lead to good things. The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor led to many very good things.” He had in mind the postwar defeat of imperialism in Asia, not the wartime triumph of democracy throughout the world. But it is the subtext of the comment that bears Chomsky’s indelible stamp. If the long-range consequences of the 1941 sneak attack against America involved some “very good things,”

the same might be hoped to result from the more recent attack. Al-Qaeda's strike, therefore, may be the opening salvo in a war in which the United States will not only be defeated internationally, but be under the gun at home. This has been Noam Chomsky's idea of a just and necessary war for the last forty years. Today, as throughout his long career, America's peril is Chomsky's hope.

PART I

CHOMSKY,
THE WORLD AND THE WORD

ONE

WHITEWASHING DICTATORSHIP IN COMMUNIST VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA

Stephen J. Morris

Since the late 1960s, Noam Chomsky's political writings have been treated with enormous respect in the United States. The sources of Chomsky's prestige are obvious. First, he is the most important theoretical linguist of modern times. Second, in his writing and speaking against American military involvement in Indochina, Chomsky seemed to provide a clear and firm basis for opposing U.S. policy in that region. While liberal academics, politicians and journalists spoke of good intentions mistakenly applied, Chomsky presented a less complex, more Manichean view of America and its adversaries. For Chomsky it was perfectly clear that the United States and the regimes it supported in Indochina represented moral iniquity, while the Communists of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia represented moral justice.

The historical consequences of the Communist victories that Chomsky—and the New Left generally—advocated were quick to manifest themselves in Indochina after Hanoi's victory. The "forces of progress" almost immediately launched massive reprisals against the communities they had conquered. In Vietnam this meant the creation of an enormous gulag of prisons, "reeducation camps" and "New Economic Zones" to deal with the hundreds of thousands of people who had dared to swim against the tides of history. Less than three years later, Hanoi began to implement an "ethnic cleansing" through deportation of Vietnam's eth-

nic Chinese minority. In neighboring Cambodia, after 1975 the Khmer Rouge undertook their historical task with even more vigor. There, “enemies” were simply murdered on a massive scale.

As the evidence of Indochinese Communist behavior began to reach the West, there were three possible responses open to those who had supported Communist victories in Indochina. The first was to admit the brutal and murderous nature of the new revolutionary regimes and the error of past political support for them. Such an admission would bring with it an effort to diminish if not eradicate the evil that these people had mistakenly contributed to. This was the path taken by, for instance, most of the democratic Left in France. The second possible response to the evidence was to admit what was going on but try to justify it, usually with some bizarre form of moral relativism (e.g., letting “them” solve their own problems in “their own way”). Some of America’s antiwar liberals, led by George McGovern, took this alternative for the first three years of the Pol Pot regime, and it remained the attitude of many of these people, including McGovern, with regard to Vietnam. The third possible response was to deny the evidence of repression, either totally or in part, and thereby retain one’s pride and prejudice. The American radical Left took this course, with Noam Chomsky in the vanguard.

The repressive character of the Communist movements and regimes was well known from the day the Vietnam War began. Indeed, it was central to the entire debate over the war. Thus, it is worth considering first how Chomsky dealt with that issue.

Chomsky and the Vietnam War

The United States government began its military intervention in Southeast Asia, in what was then French Indochina, in the middle of 1950. At that time, less than a year after the final military victory by the Communists in the Chinese civil war and just weeks after the North Korean Communists invaded South Korea, President Truman decided to provide substantial military aid to the French colonialists in their war against the Vietnamese Communists. The stated purpose of the intervention—to prevent the spread of Communism—was consistent with the broader pol-

icy of containment that had been applied in Western Europe after 1947, when the Soviet Union's takeover of Eastern Europe became manifest. The United States' global policy of containment was to prevent all non-Communist countries from falling into the orbit of the Soviet Union. During the 1960s, after the Soviet Union and China had split over, among other things, the tactical question of support for "wars of national liberation" in the Third World, U.S. policy was based on a fear of the influence of Maoist China more than that of the Soviet Union. But in any case, the United States publicly opposed the spread of all Communist movements on both national security and moral grounds.

Chomsky rejected that rationale for American military interventions against Communism in the Third World. Never one for an original idea in analyzing the nature of world politics, Chomsky propounded a materialist interpretation of American motives in the Third World: "The overriding goal of American policy has been to construct a system of societies that are open to free economic intervention by private enterprise."¹ As a corollary, he held a benign view of Communist revolutions in the Third World. In his eyes, these were popular movements attempting to escape a system of global economic domination by the capitalist West in order to chart a course of participatory socialist economic liberation. Thus Chomsky's view of the war in Vietnam was a simple one: "the Vietnam war is simply a catastrophic episode, a grim and costly failure in this long-term effort to reduce Eastern Asia and much of the rest of the world to part of the American-dominated economic system."²

What about the arguments that the United States presented as to its own motives, namely that it was trying to prevent the spread of brutal dictatorships modeled on and aligned with those of the Soviet Union or China? For Chomsky, this justification was merely a means to conceal the true motives from the American public so as to ensure political support: "The ideology of anticommunism has served as a highly effective technique of popular mobilization in support of American policies of intervention and subversion in the postwar period."³

In the manner of all analysts influenced by Marxism, Chomsky reduced the stated foreign policy motives of the United

States to an “ideology,” and he confused the social purpose of an ideology with its truthfulness or falsehood. Thus he felt no need to refute it. Accordingly he rejected *a priori* any view of Communist revolutions in the Third World as attempts by minorities to seize power in order to create totalitarian dictatorships. He also rejected any evidence of deliberate policies of mass murder by these elites in pursuit of their ideological agendas.

Yet for those who are concerned whether or not a government’s stated policy is based upon an accurate portrayal of political and social reality, evidence matters. This is especially so when the lives of millions of people are at stake in the outcome of a war. Let us consider what the evidence was and is about who the enemy of the United States was in Vietnam.

The regime that controlled North Vietnam after 1954 was the political creation of the Vietnamese Communist Party, founded in 1930 by Nguyen Ai Quoc—a full-time employee of the Moscow-based Communist International (Comintern), who later adopted the alias Ho Chi Minh. At the time, the new party consisted of a handful of Vietnamese Communist exiles in Hong Kong. It was originally named the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) to indicate its ambition to rule over all of the former French colonies in Southeast Asia, which included the ethnically non-Vietnamese and subsequently independent nations of Cambodia and Laos. After World War II, the party went underground, though its leaders controlled an ostensibly nationalist political front organization called the Viet Minh, which attempted to destroy all rival Vietnamese nationalist organizations. Its agenda was to seize total power, first by negotiation with the French, and from late 1946 on, by expelling the French from the region through armed force. The clandestine ICP resurfaced as three separate entities in 1951. The Vietnamese segment was renamed the Vietnam Workers’ Party in 1951—and in eschewing the word “Communist” it was paralleling the deceptive nomenclature of the Communist parties in East Germany and North Korea.

The Vietnamese Communists gained control of that part of the former French colony that lay north of the 17th parallel after the signing of the ceasefire agreements between France and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) at Geneva in 1954. As

the name suggests, the DRV was modeled on the “people’s democracies” that Stalin had created in Eastern Europe and Asia, especially in East Germany (German Democratic Republic) and in North Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea)—all of which laid claim to authority over the entirety of their politically divided countries. Like these, North Vietnam was anything but democratic. It was a nation run by a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party, monolithic in its internal organization, its secret police, and its insistence on either co-opting or murdering all of its political rivals. It was Stalinist in its ambition to control every aspect of society, its intent to destroy all autonomous social forces, and its primitive ideology of a unified Communist world.

These facts about the Stalinist and Comintern genesis of the Vietnamese Communists were available at the time Chomsky began writing about the Vietnam War.⁴ Yet nowhere in his writings about Vietnam does the word “Stalinist” appear. That would interfere with the benign image of the enemy as merely a popular movement of the rural peasantry. Even the word “Communist” appears only rarely, usually as a proper noun in the context of Chomsky’s attempting to satirize Western policies with his characteristically heavy sarcasm.

It is important to realize that the Vietnamese Communists’ attitude toward Stalin was never one of political convenience. Long after Stalin’s death in 1953, when the name of the Soviet tyrant had been discredited even in the Soviet Union, not to mention Eastern Europe, the North Vietnamese, like their North Korean comrades, continued to revere Stalin publicly. For example, on the centenary of Stalin’s birth, in December 1979, the Vietnamese Communists wrote:

Regarding the international communist and workers’ movement and the national liberation movement in the world, Stalin, together with other Soviet leaders, contributed a great deal to their varied activities. In conjunction with other party leaders, Stalin waged a struggle against all expressions of opportunism—Trotskyism, right opportunism, bourgeois nationalism—in defense of the purity of Marxism-Leninism.⁵

There was also a strong Maoist influence on the Vietnamese Communists. Ho Chi Minh went to Moscow in December 1949

on the occasion of Stalin's seventieth birthday and asked him for massive aid in his fight against the French. In January 1950, following the Chinese Communist victory against the Chinese Nationalists, Stalin agreed. He instructed the Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong to provide all the military equipment, military and political advisers, and sanctuaries in China that the Vietnamese Communists needed. The Chinese also brought their whole *modus operandi* of totalitarian social organization and terrorist mass campaigns to North Vietnam.

Most ominous was the Land Reform Campaign, a centrally directed campaign of terror under the pretext of dispossessing landlords and giving "land to the tiller," which Mao had devised to massacre several million unarmed local rural elites of north China during 1947–48 and south China during 1950–53.⁶ The Vietnamese campaign, which was conducted by Vietnamese cadres after instruction from and under supervision by the Chinese advisers, involved the murder of unknown tens of thousands of innocent Vietnamese peasants, falsely labeled landlords, during the years 1953–56. In both Vietnam and China there were few landlords in the rural areas, and so the party cadres were compelled to invent them. They chose to denounce and kill anyone who had a little more money or possessions than the rest of the population. But following these massacres, in Vietnam as in China, the Communists reversed their "land to the tiller" program and introduced a collectivization of agriculture under party-state control, along the lines of Stalin's Soviet Union.

Because of several widely publicized works, Chomsky knew the broad outlines of the Maoist influence in North Vietnam when he began writing. The revelations of the Maoist role in North Vietnam and its political and military significance have subsequently been fully confirmed by the Chinese and by many Vietnamese witnesses.⁷ Chomsky ignored the published eyewitness accounts of Vietnamese defectors and the well-documented scholarship of a Chinese-American academic historian, which show that the land reform was a deliberate and brutal act of mass murder. He preferred to rely upon an essay by a radical left-wing British journalist, Richard Gott (subsequently revealed to have been on the payroll of the Soviet KGB), who was not a wit-

ness to the events and who had traveled there more than a decade later, as a guest of the Hanoi government. Chomsky endorsed Gott's conclusion that the "land reform" massacres were not a deliberate, centrally directed policy of mass murder, but rather "a chaotic affair," and in general a good thing for the North Vietnamese people. The mass killings, Chomsky enthused, "laid the basis for a new society which has overcome starvation and rural misery and offers the peasants hope for the future."⁸

Chomsky visited North Vietnam for a week in April 1970. His account of his trip, written in the most leaden prose, was first published in the *New York Review of Books* in 1970 and reprinted in his book of essays entitled *At War with Asia*. One would have thought that Chomsky, as a self-proclaimed critic of Stalinism, would have provided a critical view of the guided tour he was subject to. On the contrary, his account is a paradigm for the literature of fellow-traveling visitors to totalitarian states. Chomsky made no admission that he was the guest of a totalitarian regime. As we will see, he did not think North Vietnam was ruled by a totalitarian regime. He also made no acknowledgment of the ubiquitous posters and placards of Lenin and Stalin, which even the left-wing writer Susan Sontag reported seeing on her visit. Unable to speak the Vietnamese language and dependent upon a translator, Chomsky repeated the accounts of his official guides uncritically, as if their information carried some certainty of truthfulness, rather than simply being official government propaganda. Although he conceded that the economy of the country was centrally directed, Chomsky asserted that there "appears to be a high degree of democratic participation at the village and regional levels."⁹

How could he know such a thing? Had he observed a democratic process in the villages? Of course not. He was receiving enlightenment from his trusted Communist government guides.

As for North Vietnam's future development, Chomsky was not too perturbed by the Marxist-Leninist regime that controlled the population. He seemed to think that the country's lack of freedom was a product of the "American war" and that there was a good chance it would become democratic after the war was over:

My personal guess is that, unhindered by imperialist intervention, the Vietnamese would develop a modern industrial society with much popular participation in its implementation and much direct democracy at the lower levels of organization. It would be a highly egalitarian society with excellent conditions of welfare and technical education, but with a degree of centralization of control that, in the long run, will pose serious problems that can be overcome only if they eliminate party direction in favor of direct popular control at all levels. At the moment, the leadership appears to be approaching these problems in a flexible and intelligent fashion.¹⁰

Who exactly did Chomsky imagine were the Vietnamese who would “eliminate party direction?” Some Vietnamese had tried to achieve that in the province of North Vietnam in 1956, in a small-scale replica of the popular uprising that took place in Hungary at the same time. The Hanoi leadership dealt with that problem in a “flexible and intelligent fashion” by bringing in tanks and soldiers to ensure the slaughter of the “reactionaries” and “counter-revolutionaries.” Chomsky never discusses this disturbing historical precedent.¹¹

Thus, despite his much-vaunted claims of intellectual independence, we find nothing in Chomsky’s wartime writings about Communist Vietnam that could distinguish him from countless other Marxist ideologues or self-styled “progressives” who had gone on guided tours of North Vietnam and were in thrall to the propaganda machine of the Vietnamese Communists.

Chomsky on Postwar Vietnam

Several years after the war was over, Chomsky had another chance to cast an objective judgment on the state of political and social freedom in Vietnam, “unhindered by imperialist intervention.” *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, completed in 1979 and published in 1980, contains Chomsky’s most extensive defense of Communist rule in Vietnam. Written in collaboration with Edward S. Herman, a professor of finance at the University of Pennsylvania, Chomsky’s two-volume extravaganza not only was an attempt to reconstruct the anti-Western ideology of the

New Left; it also is the most extensive rewriting of a period of contemporary history ever produced in a nontotalitarian society.

The serious transgression is not Chomsky's inability to grasp the truth about repression in postwar Vietnam; far more disturbing are the methods he uses to deny the truth. Linguistics professor Chomsky, working in conjunction with finance professor Herman, adopted the halo of Professional Scholar, creating hundreds of footnotes to give the pretense of sober and balanced inquiry. Yet the footnotes cannot stand up to serious scrutiny. Over and over again, Chomsky and Herman presented the most tenuous and unreliable sources as firm and credible evidence, while dismissing the contradictory accounts of eyewitnesses whose past record—often of support for or involvement with the Communist movement—made them highly credible sources. The Chomsky technique (which would reappear in other works) involved character assassination of the people he disagreed with and quite elaborate distortion and misrepresentation of opponents' views. There are even instances of widely reported and credible evidence (published in newspapers Chomsky was happy to quote when it suited him) not even being mentioned at all.

First, let us briefly summarize the "human rights" record of the Vietnamese Communists since 1975, a record well known from the voluminous informal reports of thousands of refugees, some many thousands of whom were interviewed over many years by dozens of independent journalists, scholars and human rights activists from the United States, Europe and Asia. Many of these accounts were published in abbreviated form on many occasions in major reputable newspapers in the West; others were published in book form as memoirs.¹²

Instead of embarking on a program of "national reconciliation and concord," as provided for in the Paris Peace Accords they signed in 1973 and as promised in the policy platforms they had promulgated for over fifteen years, the Vietnamese Communists embarked on a policy of vengeful repression. They arrested and incarcerated hundreds of thousands of former military officers, civil servants, intellectuals and religious leaders. Under the guise of reeducation, these Vietnamese victims of "liberation" were confined in prisons and forced labor camps of Hanoi's

gulag. Except for a fortunate minority whose families were able to obtain their release through bribery, the majority of senior officers and civil servants were confined for years and some suffered a slow death through overwork, malnutrition and disease. None of the hundreds of thousands of political prisoners were ever formally charged.

Many other Vietnamese—perhaps up to two million—were deported to the New Economic Zones (NEZs) located in remote, inhospitable regions of the country, comparable to the Siberian exile long employed by Hanoi's patrons. As if these atrocities did not suffice, the Hanoi regime in 1978 began a pogrom against its ethnic Chinese citizens. The regime deported those who possessed no gold or jewelry to China or the NEZs and expelled those who could afford to pay the massive exit bribe in unseaworthy boats into the South China Sea.¹³ This racist policy, like the earlier repressive policies, elicited the protest of the civilized wing of the American antiwar movement, led by Joan Baez. But it did not raise a murmur from Professor Chomsky and friends. The distinguished professor of linguistics was too busy trying to prove that it couldn't all be true.

For Chomsky there were only two questions to be asked about the issue of Vietnam: whose interests were being served by all these "negative reports," and how could the reports be disproved? Chomsky and Herman continually emphasize how the picture of Vietnam I have just presented is useful for "reconstructing the imperial ideology" of American capitalism. The objective of their reiteration cannot be to convince their readers rationally of the truth of the situation. The objective is rather to affect emotionally the attitude of their less sophisticated readers. After all, Chomsky and Herman fail to make the equally obvious observation that their own point of view serves the interest of the Communist rulers of Indochina.

Using the "anti-imperialist" techniques of scholarly inquiry, Chomsky quotes a string of journalists and political activists who had been allowed to visit Vietnam for varying periods after 1975. All of these favorable reports were by foreigners, all of whom had been screened by the Hanoi authorities for their past political writings and activities before they were given a visa, and few of

whom had actually lived in Vietnam for an extended period of Communist rule. Chomsky and Herman are quite uncritical of these accounts of life under the new order, despite the fact that they were published in the most obscure of political newsletters, with names like *New England Peacework* and *The Disciple*. A different standard, however, is applied to accounts of postwar Vietnam that cast the regime in an unfavorable light. This evidence of repression came not only from hundreds of refugees, interviewed by the experienced correspondents of some of the world's most prestigious newspapers (especially Pulitzer Prize winner Henry Kamm of the *New York Times*, George McArthur of the *Los Angeles Times* and Roland-Pierre Paringaux of *Le Monde*). Evidence of repression, available at the time Chomsky was writing, also came in more detailed accounts from five highly articulate and exceptionally credible eyewitnesses—four Vietnamese and one Canadian—all of whom had actually lived in both Communist and non-Communist Vietnam for several years, and some of whom had actively opposed both the former South Vietnamese government of Nguyen Van Thieu and the United States.

Chomsky summarily dismisses two of these direct eyewitness accounts, by Father Andre Gelinias and Nguyen Cong Hoan, after some nasty attempts at character assassination and misrepresentation of their views. Father Gelinias, a Canadian Jesuit priest who had lived and taught in South Vietnam since 1957 and who stayed on for fifteen months after the Communist takeover, was especially abused. The bulk of his analysis of repression in Vietnam, published in *L'Express* and the *New York Review of Books*, and the evidence he presents for it are not even discussed. Instead, Chomsky homes in on a few carelessly worded statements, wrenches them out of their context, and gives them a significance that is not to be found in the article itself.

For example, in the context of discussing tensions between the northern Communists and the southern Communists, Gelinias mentions the demoralization of northern troops after they arrived in the south and witnessed the fact that life in South Vietnam had not been as grim as their own regime's propaganda had suggested. Gelinias says of the newly arrived North Vietnamese troops:

They had been told that they had come to liberate their brothers who were miserable, enslaved by the Americans, etc. They had discovered a country with freedoms, and a rich one, a real Ali Baba's cave. They discovered above all that they were not welcomed as "liberators" but that they were more often hated. And not this time by the French or Americans, but by Vietnamese like themselves.

The meaning of these sentences was clear to anyone who read the article. Chomsky, however, chooses to ignore the context and crudely extracts a few words to make it appear that Gelinas must have been part of the U.S. "colonialist enterprise," either blind or cynical toward the poverty and misery of Vietnam. He fails to deal with Gelinas's main point: that the northern troops were disillusioned with the gap between their propaganda-induced expectations and the reality they found in the south. The entire substance of Gelinas's testimony is dealt with in similar fashion. Although Gelinas appears to have made an unwarranted claim about the prevalence of suicides in postwar South Vietnam, his extensive and complex analysis, much of it corroborated by other witnesses, is systematically caricatured beyond recognition in Chomsky's representation.

Chomsky also deals dismissively with other important eyewitness accounts. The published congressional testimony of Mr. Nguyen Van Coi, who was tortured by the Hanoi regime, is mentioned without criticism, but only in a footnote!

Finally, two equally compelling eyewitness accounts of the gulag by former inmates—Doan Van Toai and Nguyen Huu Hieu, both former antiwar activists and opponents of South Vietnamese president Thieu—are not even mentioned at all. This is in spite of the fact that Toai's Paris press conference account was published in every major French newspaper (from *France Soir*, through the liberal *Le Monde*, to the socialist *Le Matin* and *Libération*) and the liberal and leftist weekly magazines (*L'Express* and *Le Nouvel Observateur*), all of which Chomsky often cites when they support a conclusion he is defending. Toai's press conference was reported well before Chomsky and Herman finished their book and was also excerpted in *Newsweek* and *The Observer* (London). Toai had a major impact in Europe and went

on to write a best-selling book published in five languages. Later, he and a former Buddhist monk, Nguyen Huu Hieu, went on a lecture tour of the United States, and their accounts were published in many major newspapers, including the *Washington Post* and the *Boston Globe*. But Chomsky, who is able to discover sources nobody has ever heard of (like *Vietnam Southeast Asia Journal* and *New England Peacework*) and who chides as propagandists those who overlook these “important sources,” fails to find any of these reports.

There are other classic instances of Chomsky playing fast and loose with the source material. One of his principal sources for his view that postwar Vietnam was not so awful was the well-known French journalist and biographer of Ho Chi Minh, Jean Lacouture. Chomsky strongly recommended the account given by Lacouture and his wife, based on a visit to Vietnam in 1976. Though not uncritical of the new regime, it painted a fairly optimistic picture of the regime’s goals and methods. Chomsky quotes Lacouture’s statement that the Vietnamese Communists “are probably the first victors in a civil war (embittered and aggravated by two foreign interventions) who have not unleashed any operation of massive reprisal.” Chomsky and Herman then bemoan the fact that Lacouture’s book could not find an American publisher and was not reviewed in the United States, seeing this as further evidence of how the liberal press suppresses information that contradicts the “imperial ideology.” What the authors fail to mention, however, is that a year before the Chomsky-Herman book went to press, Lacouture had changed his mind. Under the influence of Doan Van Toai and others who had escaped from Vietnam, Lacouture accepted exactly the view of Vietnam that Chomsky and Herman were trying to discredit, thus becoming, in Chomsky’s terms, “a defender of the interests of U.S. imperialism.”

Finally, let us take a look at how Chomsky and Herman deal with those few eyewitness sources they dare to quote before dismissing them. The case of Nguyen Cong Hoan is emblematic of his approach.

Hoan was a former “Third Force” Buddhist opponent of

South Vietnamese president Thieu and the United States during the Vietnam War. Hoan's "progressive" credentials were such that the Vietnamese Communist regime offered him a seat in the rubber-stamp Vietnamese National Assembly after the war was won. Hoan's background, as a privileged member of the new regime who chose to flee to an uncertain future in the United States, made him a very important source. In a series of interviews with the *New York Times*, and later with *Newsweek* and the *Free Trade Union News*, and also in extended testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Human Rights, Hoan described the huge network of prisons and "reeducation camps" that were scattered around the Vietnamese countryside, crammed with hundreds of thousands of prisoners. He gave the first account from a reliable source of the mass executions that had occurred since the Communist victory. He also detailed the restrictions on freedom of movement and the persecution of religion. Much of this was observed at first hand, from his privileged position as a member of the Communist National Assembly.¹⁴ But Chomsky and Herman had difficulty accepting Hoan's testimony: "How credible is his testimony in general? His account of religious persecution is expressly contradicted by direct observations of Westerners and Vietnamese who lived in or visited Vietnam."

Chomsky is referring here to the guided tourists and foreign friends of Hanoi in whom he places such faith when writing about postwar Vietnam. But Hoan's report was not unique. On June 9, 1977, the Central Executive Council of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, in a statement issued in Ho Chi Minh City, leveled the same charges of political as well as religious repression that Hoan was making abroad. The statement of the Buddhist leadership (which had been at the center of militant anti-American and antigovernment activity during the war) was smuggled out of Vietnam and released in several different places. It was published in 1978 in a detailed study of religious repression in Vietnam undertaken by the noted antiwar activist James Forest entitled *The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam: Fifteen Years for Reconciliation*. The Forest study confirms the accounts of Hoan and others that there were "hundreds of thousands suf-

fering and dying in the re-education camps,” that corruption among party and government officials was rampant, and that there was systematic discrimination in favor of party and government officials and their families with regard to schooling, health services and other social amenities. *The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam*, with its meticulous documentation of the major charges, was sent to prominent members of the American antiwar movement. Yet Chomsky did not even mention it.

Hoan’s report of religious persecution had also been confirmed by the Venerable Thich Manh Giac, a Buddhist monk who had served as liaison between the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and the Communist government before fleeing by boat from Vietnam. Giac’s report of imprisoned monks and priests, smashed religious statues, sacked pagodas and persecuted religious organizations was contained in an interview published in the *Washington Post* on February 10, 1978. An indefatigable researcher when it comes to obscure left-wing sources, Chomsky apparently never came across the *Post* that day. Nor did he see the issue of April 30, 1978, which contained a long article based on excerpted interviews with several former inmates of Hanoi’s re-education camps. Nor did he see *Paris Match* of December 8, 1978, which published detailed accounts by three former political prisoners. Such defects in evidence gathering enable Chomsky to reach the following dismissive conclusion regarding Hoan: “Either the many visitors and westerners living in Vietnam who expressly contradict his claims are, once again, lying, or a charade of astonishing proportions is being enacted—or, more plausibly, Hoan is simply not a reliable commentator.”

Chomsky was plainly unwilling to admit publicly that the regime he supported in its war against the United States and South Vietnam was in fact a neo-Stalinist dictatorship.

Chomsky and Pol Pot’s Cambodia

Let us turn to a subject that reveals Chomsky’s essential thinking and his use of sources even more clearly than his exculpation of Hanoi in Vietnam: his apologetics in behalf of Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. This regime was so odious that it compares

unfavorably even with those of Hitler and Stalin. The facts about the brutality of the Khmer Rouge were known as early as 1975, though it took until 1978 for widespread concern to appear among Americans—by which time between one and two million Cambodians were already dead. On this horror story, as with the repression in Vietnam, American consciences were lagging about a year behind those of the democratic Left in France.

Who were the Khmer Rouge? The name (meaning “Cambodian Reds”) was coined by the former ruler of Cambodia, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, to describe the indigenous Communists who gained notice in Cambodia during the 1960s. They were organized into a proto-Communist party, the Khmer People’s Revolutionary Party, created by the Vietnamese Communists in 1951. In 1964 the name was changed to the Kampuchean Communist Party. Four years later they launched an armed uprising against the Sihanouk government, with the aim of overthrowing his monarchy and installing a Communist dictatorship. Because there were so few of them, they had no chance of winning on their own. That changed after the Vietnam War spread to Cambodia.

The Vietnamese Communists had been using Cambodian territory as a sanctuary and a logistical supply line for the war in South Vietnam. After a military coup d’état against Sihanouk in March 1970, the new Cambodian republican government led by Lon Nol demanded that the Vietnamese leave the country. The North Vietnamese responded by immediately attacking the armed forces of Cambodia. Six weeks later, in April 1970, the United States counterattacked the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong sanctuaries inside Cambodia. The Vietnamese Communists retreated from the border provinces to the interior of the country, and after the U.S. withdrew in May (in response to antiwar protests at home), Hanoi focused its efforts on destroying the Cambodian army and government in the countryside. Over the next two years, in the wake of their military victories, the Vietnamese Communist troops installed new local authorities under the control of the Khmer Rouge. Without the superior equipment and fighting ability of the North Vietnamese, the Khmer Rouge would never have attained any major footholds against the republican government of Cambodia.¹⁵

Within a year, the Khmer Rouge began to display the fanaticism and irrationality that would become a hallmark of their behavior. In the fall of 1971, long before their victory over the Lon Nol republican government was either certain or imminent, the Khmer Rouge, chafing under the supervision of their Vietnamese “elder brothers,” decided that the Vietnamese Communists were their enemy. In early 1972 they began attacking the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops inside Cambodia, with the idea of forcing them to leave.¹⁶

Then in early 1973, after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords between the United States and South Vietnam on one side, and North Vietnam and the Viet Cong on the other—which the Khmer Rouge refused to emulate because they were not interested in any negotiations—the Khmer Rouge began to introduce draconian policies of collectivization in the zones they controlled. This may have been irrational from the perspective of facilitating their military victory or fostering economic prosperity; but it was carefully planned and consistent with their radical Maoist ideology.

The Khmer Rouge were also committing horrible atrocities during the war itself. Unfortunately, the American press corps in Cambodia, itself hostile to American policies, was not very forthcoming in relating these stories to their readers. After the Khmer Rouge seized power over all of Cambodia in April 1975, the extent of their bizarre cruelty was first reported by several Western journalists who, from their refuge in the French embassy, witnessed the forced depopulation of Phnom Penh. Stories of mass executions and even more deaths from overwork, malnutrition and disease began to trickle out from those refugees lucky enough to escape their villages and avoid the armed patrols and minefields that obstructed their escape route to Thailand. Refugee accounts were published in a variety of newspapers around the world. The French press, including the liberal and left-wing press that had been so critical of U.S. involvement in Indochina, took the lead on this.

For example, as early as April 1975, within days of the Khmer Rouge victory, Agence France-Presse’s Joel Henri reported that a wave of executions of “rich men” and “religious

fanatics” had begun. This was based on interviews with Cambodian refugees along the border with Thailand. These refugees also reported witnessing the murder of friends.¹⁷ Other reports appeared by Western journalists on the murder of scores of government officials, again based on careful interviews with eyewitnesses. In June 1975, the *London Daily Telegraph* reported that two soldiers of the former Cambodian government said they saw Khmer Rouge soldiers beat forty officers and enlisted men to death with shovels and clubs in Cambodia’s Siem Reap province. (Another former soldier claimed that he saw forty trailers with about ten corpses in each being towed down a road.)¹⁸

In November 1975, the Bangkok newspaper *Nation* reported from interviews with refugees in Thailand that thousands of former supporters of former Prince Sihanouk, who had aided the Khmer Rouge in their war against the republican government, were massacred only days after the fall of Phnom Penh.¹⁹ During 1975–79, the important French liberal-left newspaper *Le Monde* was reporting extensively on the massacres, starvation and general horrors of life in Communist Cambodia, especially through its correspondent François Ponchaud and later through Roland-Pierre Paringaux. In May 1976, Joel Henri of Agence France-Presse was reporting on continuing massacres of former soldiers and students. In September, AFP reported that a massacre of five thousand captured government officials, non-commissioned officers and their families had taken place on April 19 and 20, 1975, south of Siem Reap in northwestern Cambodia. The source for the story was interviews with some of several dozen Khmer Rouge soldiers and group leaders who had deserted in September 1976 and escaped to Thailand. AFP noted that the defectors were in their early twenties and came from a poor peasant background.²⁰

In the United States, the volume of reporting on Cambodian suffering at the hands of the Khmer Rouge increased during 1977, particularly with reports by Henry Kamm in the *New York Times*. It was the *Reader’s Digest*, however, that made the first attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the unfolding genocide for the general reader, with John Barron and Anthony Paul conducting their own refugee interviews. Their

book *Murder of a Gentle Land* reported cruelty reminiscent of Nazi and Stalinist death camps. Because Barron and Paul were politically conservative, many intellectuals in the West refused to believe the story they presented. It took another major study of the violence, by François Ponchaud, a French priest with previous sympathies for the Khmer Rouge, to persuade all but the most stubborn doubters. By 1977, many educated people in the West had come to realize that hell on earth had been created in “Democratic Kampuchea.”

How did Noam Chomsky deal with the reports of the Cambodian holocaust? Until 1977, he didn’t deal with them at all. But in that year Chomsky, together with Edward S. Herman, published a review of three books on the Khmer Rouge in the left-wing magazine *The Nation*.²¹ Two of these books, John Barron and Anthony Paul’s *Murder of a Gentle Land* and François Ponchaud’s *Cambodge année zéro (Cambodia: Year Zero)* painted a very gruesome picture of Khmer Rouge atrocities. The other, George C. Hildebrand and Gareth Porter’s *Cambodia: Starvation and Revolution*, portrayed the Khmer Rouge regime as one that was building a humane social revolution.²²

Chomsky and Herman claimed at the end of their review: “We do not pretend to know where the truth lies amidst these sharply conflicting assessments.” They would have had us believe that their interest was merely in showing how the Western media refused to publish favorable reports of Communist revolution and were disposed to publish only critical accounts that supported the preconception that Communist revolutions are horrible. This is utterly disingenuous. Chomsky had strong views on where the truth lay, as is shown by his tone and indeed his entire critical evaluation of the three books. The pro-Khmer Rouge book of Hildebrand and Porter is described as “a carefully documented study . . . based on a wide range of sources . . . and well received by the journal of the Asia Society.” By contrast, Chomsky was openly contemptuous of Barron and Paul’s assertion that they had used diverse sources, claiming instead that they relied on U.S. and allied government officials and that “their scholarship collapses under the barest scrutiny.” He also asserted that, although Ponchaud’s book is “serious and worth reading”

(because Ponchaud was a left-wing Catholic priest who had been and remained hostile to America's war policies in Cambodia), nevertheless it "lacks the documentation provided in Hildebrand and Porter and its veracity is therefore difficult to assess. But the serious reader will find much to make him somewhat wary."

What is this documentation contained in the work of Khmer Rouge sympathizers Porter and Hildebrand that so impressed Chomsky, and that Barron and Paul and Ponchaud so desperately lack? An examination of Porter and Hildebrand's footnotes shows that they relied overwhelmingly upon official Khmer Rouge state radio broadcasts and interviews with Khmer Rouge officials, as well as the publications of French Communists (not identified as such). It is revealing that Chomsky and Herman, who regard privately owned American liberal newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* as mouthpieces of U.S. state propaganda, did not view the government-owned and government-controlled press, radio and television of revolutionary Communist states in a similar light. They also considered the writings of French Communists to be reliable sources of information on the behavior of "fraternal" Communist regimes.

Barron and Paul, as well as Ponchaud—unlike Hildebrand and Porter—relied heavily on refugee accounts in their documentation of the holocaust. Chomsky was not impressed, stressing "the extreme unreliability of refugee reports, and the need to treat them with great caution."

Two years after their lengthy book review in *The Nation*, Chomsky and Herman published *The Political Economy of Human Rights* (1979). One purpose of the book was to confirm their core beliefs that the United States ran the most brutal empire in the world, and to cast judgment on the global balance of morality since Stalin's death in 1953: "*Washington has become the torture and political murder capital of the world.*" (emphasis in the original)²³ This fantastic idea not only required pretending that the murder of tens of millions never took place in Maoist China; it also required disproving the reports of mass murder in other Communist states, particularly the growing volume of evidence that had appeared in the Western press from 1975 on

about mass killing in Cambodia.

Thus Chomsky and Herman were compelled to change tack. Instead of feigning agnosticism about where the truth lay between “conflicting reports” of mass killing in Cambodia, as they did in 1977, they conceded that “the war was followed by an outbreak of violence, massacre and repression.” But now they were interested in asserting a view of the Khmer Rouge reign as having a dual character: “on the one hand, oppression, regimentation and terror; on the other, constructive achievements for much of the population.”²⁴

This view of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge was equivalent to evaluating the moral worth of the Nazi regime in a balanced way, by first conceding that it had started World War II, had instituted a totalitarian regime, and had murdered six million Jews, but then also pointing out how the Nazis created work for all Germans, restored industry and built great autobahns. Most people would regard such an apologia for the “dual character” of Nazism as morally preposterous. However, at least the facts would have been correct. In the Cambodian case, Chomsky was making a preposterous moral apologia when his facts were wrong.

What were the constructive achievements to which Chomsky was referring? All of the accounts by the survivors of the Khmer Rouge indicate that, while the conditions of life for those not massacred were slightly better in some regions than in others because of better food rations, there was no forward progress anywhere in the economy and culture of the nation. Rather, Cambodia took a Great Leap (to use the Maoist terminology that the regime employed) hundreds of years backward—with the abolition of money, schools, modern medicine, religion, cultural life and any communication with the outside world. The Cambodian population were all slaves of “Angka” (The Organisation)—the public face that the Cambodian Communist Party hid behind—which had absolute power over the lives of its subjects and could arbitrarily decide who would live and who would die.

Yet despite their claim to accept that there was some oppression and regimentation and terror, in their discussion of the evidence Chomsky and Herman spent most of their time trying to

discredit negative reports about the Khmer Rouge. At the same time, they abandoned all pretense of critical scrutiny when it came to reports favorable to the Khmer Rouge. Chomsky and Herman failed to notice that some of the “scholarly counterevidence” in favor of the Khmer Rouge relied almost solely on the regime’s official publications and radio broadcasts; and as with Vietnam, they failed to consider the fact that some of their “scholarly sources” had since renounced the views that they were still quoting.

For instance, Chomsky wished to cast doubt on the reports of a brutal, forced evacuation of Phnom Penh at the end of the war. The reports—of which the most widely reprinted and quoted were those written by the openly antiwar American journalist Sydney Schanberg of the *New York Times* and by the British journalist Jon Swain of the *London Times*—were based solely on unique personal observation by those who had taken refuge in the French embassy in Phnom Penh at war’s end.

Schanberg and Swain observed numerous bizarre details, including the crippled and severely wounded being forced to crawl or being wheeled in their hospital beds by their relatives out into the countryside. But Chomsky and Herman were not convinced. They managed to locate what they considered an important, hitherto undiscovered document—*News from Kampuchea*, a broadsheet published by Khmer Rouge sympathizers living in Australia—that offered a very different account of the evacuation. The authors were Shane Tarr and his wife, Chou Meng, hitherto unknown New Zealand residents whose principal claim to fame was the pro-Khmer Rouge newsletter they coedited. The Tarrs claimed to have participated in the long march out of Phnom Penh into the countryside, but after three days returned (or were returned) to the French embassy to await their deportation from the country. They alleged that the march was not forced, that everyone was willing to go, and that there was no suffering or executions as the insidious Western press reported. Moreover, they were happy to have been able to participate in the “wonderful” revolution.

Chomsky didn’t seem to know anything about these authors, other than that they claimed that their glowing reports were rejected by several newspapers in New Zealand, and that

English journalist Jon Swain mentioned them in his article as having espoused revolutionary rhetoric and as having fraternized with the Khmer Rouge guards outside the embassy walls. Chomsky seemed to think that the Tarrs possessed the same credibility as two professionally trained journalists working for two of the world's best newspapers, whose background was on the public record.

This question of background is of particular relevance with regard to Sydney Schanberg's account. In an earlier article published in the *New York Times* a few days before the Communist victory in Cambodia, Schanberg had welcomed the end of the war, expressed his doubts about U.S. government predictions of a Khmer Rouge bloodbath, and declared that nothing could be worse than continuation of the war. Even his account of the deportations and his own evacuation was careful not to go beyond direct observation. Then and for some time after, Schanberg refused to make any statement of moral condemnation on the Khmer Rouge. All of this should have been sufficient to convince a reasonably impartial analyst that Schanberg had no "anticommunist axe to grind," and that therefore those horrors of the Khmer Rouge policies that he claimed to have seen actually did occur. But Chomsky paid him little heed.

The most widely acclaimed work on the Cambodian regime, in terms of its popular reception within the American liberal press, was the account of the French priest François Ponchaud. His much-cited *Cambodia: Year Zero*, in its 1977 French edition, was reviewed with disdain in *The Nation* by Chomsky and favorably in the *New York Review of Books* by Jean Lacouture. An English edition was published in 1978. In *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, Chomsky returned to offer a detailed critique of the book, sometimes damning it with faint praise, other times damning it with vile *ad hominem* abuse.

Ponchaud claimed that he had based his book on detailed interviews with hundreds out of the thousands of refugees he had met in France and in Southeast Asia. He was less interested in the accounts of the wealthy, or of those who spoke French, because they had lost too much under the new regime. Ninety-four refugees, of which seventy-seven he met in Thailand and

seventeen in Vietnam, provided him with written accounts of their experiences. He emphasized, however, that he was “mainly interested in ordinary people, army privates, peasants and laborers, people who could neither read nor write nor analyze what they had seen but whose illiterate memories could supply exact details.”²⁵ Ponchaud’s account carried extra weight, especially in liberal-left circles, because he had lived in Cambodia for ten years before the Communist victory, under both Sihanouk and Lon Nol; because he spoke Khmer; and because he claimed to have initially welcomed the Khmer Rouge victory.

At the end of his review in 1979, Chomsky repeated his concession that the book was “serious and worth reading,” but only after launching a tirade against Ponchaud’s integrity that makes the concession laughable. His commentary on Ponchaud includes the following statements:

- ◆ “As we have seen, Ponchaud plays fast and loose with numbers and is highly unreliable with quotations.”
- ◆ “In his historical comments Ponchaud tends to keep closely to the version of events offered by the U.S. propaganda system.”
- ◆ “Ponchaud’s own conclusions, it is by now clear, cannot be taken very seriously because he is simply too careless and untrustworthy.”
- ◆ “This kind of petty deceit [by Ponchaud] is unworthy of discussion except insofar as it provides some indication of the credibility of a person who is building a case on largely unverifiable evidence.”

What upset Chomsky was that Ponchaud argued that the terror of the Khmer Rouge was a systematic and centrally directed campaign. That would contradict what Chomsky wanted to believe: that the atrocities in Cambodia were “as many close observers suspect, in significant measure the result of localized peasant revenge and the acts of undisciplined troops.” Chomsky also was angry that Ponchaud did not give full weight to the “bloody U.S. sponsored counter-revolution and direct assault that precipitated the bloody revolution.”

Who are these “close observers” whom Chomsky preferred to believe? First of all, the previously discussed Gareth Porter and George Hildebrand, who studied the Khmer Rouge from the

proximity of Ithaca, in upstate New York. There they interviewed no refugees, but carried out research that Chomsky described as “carefully documented from Cambodian and western sources.” As I pointed out earlier, these sources are the radio broadcasts and publications of the regime and its French Communist comrades. This fraudulently unscholarly work is part of a long track record that the authors, and their patron Professor George Kahin, have established of being factually wrong about the history of Communism in Vietnam and Cambodia, and of being flagrant deniers of the mass killings that the Communist elites there have perpetrated.²⁶

Chomsky and Herman tell us about another important authority on the relatively benign nature of the Khmer Rouge, whom the ideologically biased Western press has overlooked. This is Ben Kiernan, described by Chomsky as “an Australian scholar” of Cambodia, one of whose articles cited was published in an obscure undergraduate journal, the *Melbourne Journal of Politics*. What Chomsky doesn’t say about Kiernan is that he was, at the time, an actively pro-Communist student at an Australian university. More important, Chomsky never informs his readers that in researching his articles, Kiernan did not interview refugees, but relied instead on official regime publications, newspaper reports and mysterious secondhand accounts. Accordingly, Kiernan wrote: “There is ample evidence in Cambodian and other sources that the Khmer Rouge movement is not the monster that the press have recently made it out to be.”²⁷

Moreover, in another working paper (not a peer-reviewed publication), Kiernan, together with his dissertation supervisor and promoter David Chandler, are given credit for purportedly showing that refugee accounts critical of the Khmer Rouge were not as uniform as the “anticommunist western press” would have had us believe. This neglected piece of research contained a hypothesis: that perhaps Khmer Rouge terror was localized to the northwest of the country and not a result of central state direction. It turns out that Chandler and Kiernan’s “field research” consisted of an interview with *one* refugee, who escaped from Cambodia in January 1976 and arrived in Australia three months later. This single account, based on eight months under the Com-

munist regime, contradicted the accounts of thousands of other refugees, many of whom had spent several years under the regime. Chandler and Kiernan concluded that this refugee was more reliable as a source on life under the Khmer Rouge because he was not from the northwest of Cambodia, where most refugees giving negative reports came from, and where conditions were allegedly different from the rest of the country.

Why did Chandler and Kiernan not interview other refugees, from among the more than 100,000 living on the border with Thailand, who weren't from the northwest of Cambodia in order to test this hypothesis? Close observers of Kiernan's ideologically driven career as a supporter of the Hanoi regime, and of the particular Communist regime in power in Phnom Penh at the time he wrote, could guess why.²⁸ In any case, Chomsky did not tell us which scientific method allows the account of one witness to carry more weight than, or even equal weight with, the accounts of thousands of witnesses. It would more likely be a theological method than a scientific one. Certainly no major Western university would tolerate such a study as worthy of the label "credible, objective scholarship."

Nor did Chomsky admit that in 1979, Kiernan—who has always expressed opinions on Cambodia that are in accordance with the Vietnamese Communist Party line—disowned his earlier "important studies" on Cambodia and admitted he was wrong about Pol Pot. And this retraction was in a journal that listed Chomsky on its editorial board!²⁹

Another mysterious source that Chomsky and Herman continually referred to in their exposé of the failure of Western reporting on Cambodia was Michael Vickery, whose scholarly efforts, they claimed, were deliberately ignored by the ideologically blinkered Western liberal intelligentsia. Who was Michael Vickery? Chomsky described him simply as a "Khmer-speaking westerner who is an academic specialist on Cambodia." In fact, Vickery's main scholarly work on the Khmer Rouge, at that time, was a long letter he had written to Chomsky.

While conceding that some oppression, regimentation and terror existed in Cambodia, Chomsky wanted to place the blame for it upon the United States. He believed that all the atrocities

of the Khmer Rouge were a product of the American bombing of Cambodia in 1973. Whom did he rely upon for this interpretation? One source was Richard Dudman, correspondent for the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, who was a prisoner of the Khmer Rouge in 1969 and who claimed that as a prisoner he observed the American bombing radicalizing the Cambodian peasantry. Chomsky neglected to point out that Dudman did not speak the Khmer language, so it is hard to figure out how, from his prison cell, he could have gathered evidence of what the illiterate, non-English-speaking Cambodian peasants were thinking.³⁰ Chomsky's other source was David Chandler, who suggested in 1976 that the American bombing might have driven the Cambodian Communists out of their minds. Of course it would have been difficult for Chandler to have had any evidence for this cheap piece of pop psychology, since during the relevant war years he was comfortably ensconced as a graduate student at the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, and at the time he made that wild claim he had not yet interviewed any "post-bombing" Khmer Rouge.³¹ None of those who have interviewed Khmer Rouge leaders in the decades since the regime's collapse have reported the Khmer Rouge claiming that they felt like decent human beings until the U.S. bombing drove them nuts.³²

In any case, as we have seen, the extremism and fanaticism of the Khmer Rouge first manifested itself before the massive American bombing campaign of 1973. And it was carefully planned—not some spontaneous outpouring of rage, as its apologists imagine. It reflected an extreme Marxist-Leninist outlook, with clear precedents in other Communist tyrannies, especially those of Stalin and Mao. This ideological outlook had Cambodian characteristics in that it reflected the deep anxieties Cambodians feel about their predatory neighbors, especially the Vietnamese. Thus the behavior of the Khmer Rouge can be more plausibly and intelligibly explained, in large part, as a reaction of highly primitive ideologues, influenced by the Maoist model of Communism and the Maoist model of independence from the Soviet Union. The other part of the explanation lies in the Khmer Rouge leaders' deep sense of resentment toward the Vietnamese, not the Americans. So they wanted to prove to their overbearing

Vietnamese mentors, and to the rest of the world, that they could make a Communist revolution better and faster than anyone else. Thus Khmer Rouge leaders Son Sen and Khieu Samphan told Sihanouk in 1975: "Our country's place in history will be assured. . . . We will be the first nation to create a completely Communist society without wasting time on intermediate steps."³³

Let us be clear about what the issues at stake are. The weight of scholarly evidence makes clear, beyond any shadow of doubt, that the Khmer Rouge leaders carried out a radical Communist revolution that led to the death of over one million people, perhaps as many as two million. This dreadful situation was not a product of the world isolating Cambodia. It was a result of the Khmer Rouge dictatorship isolating Cambodia from the world while it pursued irrational economic policies, including collectivist agriculture, depopulating the cities, forcibly overworking the population, stopping private commerce, abolishing money, exterminating most of the nation's educated people, exporting to foreign countries the rice needed by the starving populace, closing down all hospitals, and refusing foreign offers of medical assistance.³⁴ These facts were known at the time the Khmer Rouge were in power, as was their explanatory relevance. But Chomsky refused to believe them, and attacked the integrity of those who tried to tell the world the truth.

Conclusions

Noam Chomsky is in no meaningful sense a scholar of the countries he writes about. Nor is he even a learned polemicist. His writings show no signs that he has immersed himself in the standard scholarly literature of the history or culture of either Vietnam or Cambodia. Instead, Chomsky quotes mostly what appears to be an assemblage of newspaper and magazine clippings sent to him by friends. It is not surprising, then, that his work is devoid of any genuine intellectual insights; it is merely a shallow and turgid brief for an ideologically driven prosecution.

Chomsky has a standard routine for evaluating evidence of

atrocities carried out by the Communist rulers of Vietnam and Cambodia. He attempts to discredit the studies critical of the Indochinese Communist regimes by challenging the integrity of the authors, or by taking issue with some point of detail that he blows out of all proportion as a way of implying that the rest of the study is questionable. He then drags out the most obscure authors—some published in the most obscure left-wing magazines or newsletters and some not even published at all—and accuses the Western media of having suppressed their important reports.

Why would Chomsky write essays and books that attempt to whitewash the repressive policies of dictatorships, using methods that are such a travesty of academic standards? The answer is unfortunately a simple one. As a radical political ideologue, he is crippled by an intense emotional commitment to the cause of anti-Americanism. Operating on the principle that “my enemy’s enemy is my friend,” he wholeheartedly embraced the struggle of two of the world’s most ruthlessly brutal regimes. The pity was that whitewashing tyranny was not the only option open to Chomsky. Many members of the non-Stalinist French Left mustered the courage to admit that the political movements whose victory they had advocated for so many years were morally appalling. Noam Chomsky has never been able to muster such courage. His vanity, his hatred of America and his support for its adversaries are too overpowering.

NOTES

- ¹ Noam Chomsky, *At War with Asia* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 16.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.
- ⁴ The basic historical outline was to be found in the well-known writings of Bernard Fall, especially his classic *The Two Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis* (New York: Praeger, 1967), esp. chs. 6 and 8; and Bernard Fall, ed., *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920–1966* (New York: Praeger, 1967), esp. pp. 188–90. The murder of the Trotskyites by Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap's agents was described in Bernard Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, and I. Milton Sacks, "Marxism in Vietnam," in *Marxism in Southeast Asia*, ed. Frank N. Trager (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1959). The general analysis of the Comintern genesis of the party and its significance is confirmed and given more accurate detail, on the basis of research in the Comintern archives in Moscow, in Stephen J. Morris, *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia: Political Culture and the Causes of War* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), ch. 1, esp. pp. 28–31, and ch. 6.
- ⁵ Hanoi radio, Vietnam News Agency, December 21, 1979; Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Report, FBIS-APA-79-24, December 21, 1979, K1.
- ⁶ On the Chinese campaign see Ezra Vogel, *Canton under Communism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), esp. pp. 101–8.
- ⁷ The account of Maoist Chinese influence on North Vietnamese Communism was to be found in P. J. Honey, ed., *North Vietnam Today: Profile of a Communist Satellite* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962). More detail on the land reform was contained in the writings of a former Viet Minh fighter and defector, Hoang Van Chi, especially in his lengthy book *From Colonialism to Communism* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964). A more concise and sober account, with considerable documentation, was produced by the

Chinese-American scholar King Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938–1954* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), esp. ch. 5. The general thesis of profound Maoist influence on North Vietnam, including during the bloody “land reform” terror, has been confirmed subsequently by the late French Communist historian Georges Boudarel, who had been assigned to Saigon in 1950 by the French party to work as a liaison with the Viet Minh, in his chapter “L'idéocratie importée au Vietnam avec la maoïsme,” in *La bureaucratie au Vietnam: Vietnam-Asie débat*, ed. Georges Boudarel et al. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1983), pp. 31–106. Most important are two subsequent publications. First is the writing of Colonel Bui Tin, the former editor of the Vietnamese Communist army newspaper *Quang Doi Nhan Dan*, in his memoir, *Following Ho Chi Minh: Memoirs of a North Vietnamese Colonel* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995). Finally, the work of the Chinese American scholar Qiang Zhai provides detailed evidence from Chinese government researchers and archival sources on the depth of Chinese involvement in Vietnam. Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

⁸ Chomsky, *At War with Asia*, p. 219.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

¹¹ The event is discussed in Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, pp. 156–57.

¹² Some of the better memoir accounts of postwar Vietnam are: Nguyen Long, *After Saigon Fell: Everyday Life under the Vietnamese Communists* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1981); Truong Nhu Tang, with David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, *A Viet Cong Memoir: An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985); Doan Van Toai and David Chanoff, *The Vietnamese Gulag* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986); Nguyen Ngoc Nhan, *The Will of Heaven: A Story of One Vietnamese and the End of His World* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1982); Tran Tri Vu, *Lost Years: My 1,632 Days in Vietnamese Reeducation Camps* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1988); Bui Tin, *Following Ho Chi Minh* (see n. 7).

¹³ The details of this process, and the evidence, which includes secret documentary reports of the Soviet embassy in Hanoi, are to be found in Morris, *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia*, pp. 175–79, 187–93.

¹⁴ *Human Rights in Vietnam: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations*, U.S. House of Representatives, Ninety-fifth Congress, First

Session, June 16, 21 and July 26, 1977 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977).

- ¹⁵ The only detailed and reliable account of the military events of the war in Cambodia is Wilfred P. Deac, *Road to the Killing Fields: The Cambodian War of 1970–1975* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1997).
- ¹⁶ On the history of Khmer Rouge relations with the Vietnamese during this period, see Morris, *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia*, ch. 2.
- ¹⁷ AFP 26 April 1975; FPIS-APA 28 April 1975.
- ¹⁸ United Press International, *The Australian*, May 8, 1975; *The Australian*, June 27, 1975.
- ¹⁹ *Nation* 2 November 1975; P 3. FBIS-APA 3 November 1975 H1.
- ²⁰ AFP 14 May 1976; FBIS-APA 20 May 1976; AFP 22 September 1976; FBIS-APA 23 September 1976.
- ²¹ Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, “Distortions at Fourth Hand,” *The Nation*, June 25, 1977.
- ²² John Barron and Anthony Paul, *Murder of a Gentle Land: The Untold Story of Genocide in Cambodia* (New York: Reader’s Digest Press, 1977); François Ponchaud, *Cambodge année zéro* (Paris: Éditions Julliard, 1977); George C. Hildebrand and Gareth Porter, *Cambodia: Starvation and Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976).
- ²³ Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, Vol. 1, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (Boston: South End Press, 1979), p. 16.
- ²⁴ Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, Vol. 2, *After the Cataclysm: Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology* (Boston: South End Press, 1979), pp. xii–xiii.
- ²⁵ François Ponchaud, *Cambodia: Year Zero* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), p. xv.
- ²⁶ To see the extensive evidence of George Kahin and Gareth Porter’s massive falsehoods about the history of Vietnam and Cambodia, and their particular attempts to whitewash the mass murders perpetrated there, see Stephen J. Morris, “Ho Chi Minh, Pol Pot, and Cornell,” *National Interest*, Summer 1989.
- ²⁷ Ben Kiernan, “Cambodia in the News, 1975–1976,” *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, 1976.
- ²⁸ On Kiernan’s record as a propagandist for Pol Pot and the Vietnamese-installed successor regime, see Stephen J. Morris, “The Wrong Man to Investigate Cambodia,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 17, 1995; and Steve Heder, “Racism, Marxism, Labelling and Genocide in Ben Kiernan’s *The Pol Pot Regime*,” *Southeast Asian Research*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 101–53.
- ²⁹ Ben Kiernan, “Vietnam and the Governments and People of Kam-

- puchea," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol. 11, no. 4 (1979).
- ³⁰ Richard Dudman, *Forty Days with the Enemy* (New York: Live Right, 1971).
- ³¹ Over the years, Chandler has retained a habit of saying different and sometimes contradictory things, according to what seems appropriate to the political and other expectations of his listening or reading audience, or according to his political or personal grievances. I base this judgment on years of personal contact with Chandler, and on the accounts of others who have known him.
- ³² The best account in English of life among the Khmer Rouge elites is Laurence Picq, *Beyond the Horizon: Five Years with the Khmer Rouge* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989). Picq was married to a senior official of the Khmer Rouge Foreign Ministry. I met him and other KR officials, including Foreign Minister Ieng Sary, in their guerrilla camps inside Cambodia while on assignment for CBS News in 1983. Interviews with other Khmer Rouge leaders, including Khmer Rouge party boss Pol Pot, standing committee member Ta Mok, and the head of the Toul Sleng torture and interrogation center Duch, were conducted exclusively by the *Far Eastern Economic Review* reporter Nate Thayer in 1997 and 1999. See *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 6, 1999.
- ³³ Prince Norodom Sihanouk, *War and Hope: The Case for Cambodia* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 86. The interpretation I have advanced for Khmer Rouge behavior is partly supported in Morris, *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia*, esp. pp. 69–75.
- ³⁴ On the Khmer Rouge refusal to accept medical assistance from Algeria and two other nonaligned countries, see the testimony of the State Department specialist on Cambodia, Mr. Charles Twining, in *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations*, U.S. House of Representatives, Ninety-fifth Congress, First Session, July 26, 1977 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing House, 1977), p. 9.

TWO

CHOMSKY AND THE COLD WAR

Thomas M. Nichols

The Cold War effectively made Noam Chomsky the prominent voice that he is. Without the Soviet-American conflict and the subsequent American involvement in hot spots around the world, Chomsky would have been deprived of the raw material from which he spins his master narrative on the evils of American power. While his writings regularly reach into the early history of the United States for evidence of the inherent criminality of the American enterprise, it is the development of the Cold War that nourished and sustained his rise as a public intellectual.

And yet Chomsky has written relatively little about the Cold War, its major players and public figures (other than the United States and its execrable elites, of course), its meaning, and especially its outcome. While he has written at interminable length about American policy in many of the Cold War's peripheral theaters, his works are not actually about the Cold War itself. Rather, they are about discrete episodes or particular effects of the Cold War, with examples almost always drawn from the Third World. Chomsky treats the very notion of the "Cold War"—that is, the violent ideological struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union—as practically a meaningless phrase, a smokescreen behind which both Washington and Moscow attempted to conceal their pillaging of the rest of the world. As

Chomsky himself put it, the East/West conflict is for him only “peripheral” to the events of the Cold War era.¹

We know Chomsky’s views on the manifestations of the Cold War in the Third World, as he has set them down in excruciating and repetitive detail throughout his writings. But what exactly are his thoughts about the actual Soviet/American conflict—and how well have they stood the test of time?

Chomsky’s works show a rather remarkable lack of curiosity about the Cold War, and it is tempting to ascribe this to the possibility that he doesn’t know much about Communism, the Soviet Union, or even international politics more broadly. Chomsky, it must be remembered, is inherently a dilettante. He has no evident background in historical research and no particular knowledge of, or training in, Soviet or American politics (or any other politics, for that matter). The copious citations that clutter his books are typically secondary sources that in the main amount to little more than newspaper clippings and magazine articles, “research” for which even beginning graduate students would be given poor grades. And while he has a dedicated following as a supposed scholar of American foreign policy, Chomsky writes far afield from his own scholarly training and expertise in linguistics. (One can only imagine how he would regard a similar dabbling in linguistics by specialists in international relations.)

In reality, of course, Chomsky knows much more about the USSR and the Cold War than he appears to, and he knows as well that to discuss these subjects at any appreciable length is to risk undermining the carefully constructed picture of the world that is the foundation of his anti-Americanism. But he has provided glimpses and asides in his work that reveal much about his views on the Cold War, and even more about his evasive method of argument.

Chomsky and Communism

In fairness to Chomsky, it must be said that he was not a particular supporter or admirer of the Soviet Union, except insofar as he appreciated the USSR’s useful service of constraining the

United States. He has referred to the Soviet polity by its rightful description, as a totalitarian state and a tyranny. He found little of value in Soviet Communism (although he has spoken admiringly of China and other Communist dictatorships), and in fact saw the USSR as the near-twin of the United States in its repressiveness and aggression—an assertion of moral equivalence common to his denunciations of America. He does, however, repeatedly give pride of place to the United States as regards international aggressiveness, and sees the U.S. “empire” as larger and more dangerous than the Soviet empire ever was.

There is one aspect of the Soviet phenomenon that Chomsky finds worthy of some discussion. For him, the real crime represented by the USSR is not the suffering and death of millions of human beings, but rather what he sees as the Bolshevik sully of the good name of socialism. He is less concerned by the violent and dictatorial character of the Soviet regime than by the fact that many people have come to believe that socialism is evil because of its association with the USSR, and he has written of the need “to find a way to save the socialist ideal from its enemies in both of the world’s major centers of power from those who will always seek to be the State priests and social managers, destroying freedom in the name of liberation.”²

For Chomsky, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was a betrayal of socialism rather than its triumph, because instead of workers’ collectives flourishing spontaneously and independently across the Land of the Soviets, what emerged was a statist bureaucracy that by 1922 had clamped down the strong hand of hypercentralization on the former Russian Empire and then by 1929 had imposed the yoke of fully totalitarian rule. Instead of being committed to the ideology that spurred their revolt, Chomsky argues, the Bolsheviks only used ideology to mask their true project of manipulating the masses and harnessing their energies in the service of a clique of state bureaucrats and military officers.

The real question is why Chomsky thinks that what happened in the USSR wasn’t “socialism” in the first place. This is especially puzzling given that some of the worst features of the Soviet system reoccur with frightening regularity in other coun-

tries that have likewise proclaimed themselves to be socialist. It is noteworthy that Chomsky's few and brief critiques of the USSR do not lead him to wonder why other socialist states display parallel characteristics: they are poor, backward, often aggressive, and almost invariably brutal to their own people. He shows little curiosity about why so many countries replicated the very aspects of the Soviet experience that he himself admits were reprehensible. Were the workers somehow empowered and free of centralized control in later years in North Korea, China or Cuba?

Eastern Europe, it should be noted, does merit a brief mention by Chomsky, albeit as a special case. He sees the region as little more than the Soviet backyard, and before that as a backward area that could hardly avoid colonization by either East or West. "Eastern Europe," he writes, "was the original Third World"—a comment that Poles and Czechs, with a long history of enlightened thought and scientific and industrial progress, would be surprised to hear.³

As for the Bolshevik takeover of Russia in 1917, Chomsky writes that it "was immediately recognized to be 'ultranationalist,' hence unacceptable."⁴ ("Immediately recognized" by *whom* is left unstated, in a typical example of Chomsky's constant use of the passive voice to conceal the lack of evidence for his statements.) Leaving aside for the moment the tangled line of reasoning that leads Chomsky to label the Russian Revolution as "ultranationalist"—it seems to have something to do with Russian popular discontent over living standards, but he fudges the point so that he can call the revolution something other than "socialist"—it is revealing that Chomsky will criticize the outcome of a revolution led by European Bolsheviks, but not those led by the likes of Castro or Mao. This reflects another theme in Chomsky's narrative of international history since 1945: the developed world can do no right, while leftists in the Third World can do no wrong. In a variation on the myth of the noble savage, Chomsky sees Soviet Communists and American capitalists alike as schemers bent on oppressing their own people, while he gives mass murderers in the Third World the benefit of the doubt and essentially excuses them of their crimes.

Chomsky in fact shows little concern about vicious Com-

munist dictators outside of Europe. Cuban despotism, led by a virtual monarch who loudly proclaims his adherence to socialist revolution, seems neither to worry Chomsky nor to be worth sustained examination. Insofar as he is willing to criticize the Cuban system, he notes that its shortcomings are the fault not of Castro but of the United States, which succeeded “through embargo and extensive terrorism, in seriously hampering social and economic development, enhancing the repressive and totalitarian elements in the Cuban revolution,” and, of course, in “driving Cuba into a relation of dependency with the Soviet Union.”⁵ Other dictatorships of the Left are likewise handled gingerly and even receive a certain degree of admiration. As Keith Windschuttle has written, “for all his in-principle disdain of Communism, when it came to the real world of international politics Chomsky turned out to endorse a fairly orthodox band of socialist revolutionaries,” usually on the premise that they were at least trying to escape the clutches of U.S. imperialism.⁶

Even terrorism is acceptable to Chomsky if performed by the right groups. In 1967, Chomsky—in a staggeringly hypocritical defense of terror by the Vietnamese Communists—engaged in exactly the kind of ends-justifying-the-means argument that he would routinely dismiss when made by defenders of American policy:

I don't accept the view that we can just condemn the [National Liberation Front] terror, period, because it was so horrible. I think we really have to ask questions of comparative costs, ugly as that may sound. And if we are going to take a moral position on this—and I think we should—we have to ask both what the consequences were of using terror and not using terror. If it were true that the consequences of not using terror would be that the peasantry in Vietnam would continue to live in the state of the peasantry of the Philippines, then I think the use of terror would be justified.⁷

Thus it's all right to excoriate Communist bureaucrats in Europe or Russia, but Communist terrorists in Vietnam need to be given special consideration. The use of terror—the taking of innocent life—“would be justified” so long as it's practiced by an appropriately fashionable set of Third World underdogs.

Chomsky's dismissal of Communist ideology as the motive force behind Soviet tyranny results from both a general cynicism about human nature and the particular requirements of his over-all argument. On one level, he does not give weight to the impact of ideas such as Communism because he does not believe that ideas actually matter (or at least not to the unenlightened masses). Chomsky's world is one in which entire populations of people in the developed world have no attachment to anything but their own socioeconomic interests, and thus could not possibly be acting out of any genuine convictions. It is a world in which career diplomats in the U.S. State Department or lifelong members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union can have no deeper motives than securing an oppressive class structure that serves their interests, while the Viet Cong, Cuban revolutionaries or the Sandinistas—whose leaders occupied the Managua mansions of the rich and lived in the regal style of the regime they had just deposed—can be praised for serving loftier ideals.

But Chomsky also has a pressing tactical reason for avoiding the thickets of ideology. Specifically, if he were to grant that the Soviet leadership ever acted out of real commitment to a Communist ideal, it would then force him to accept that it logically follows that the USSR was more of a danger than he has depicted—and perhaps more intimately related to his own putatively progressive agenda than he would like to admit. More damaging, it would also open the possibility that American policy might therefore have been grounded in the actions of men and women who were likewise motivated by their own set of ideals, an explanation that Chomsky, as a matter of first principles, has already excluded from consideration. Thus, he cannot afford to concede anything to the impact of ideology in either Washington or Moscow lest it bring down the whole teetering rhetorical structure he has tried to erect.

Immoral Equivalence and Ideological Cynicism

In Chomsky's symmetrical universe of moral explanations, the United States and the USSR are "the world's two great propa-

ganda systems.” He asserts that both of them embraced the fiction of the Soviet regime as “socialist” for their own reasons:

[For the Americans], association of socialism with the Soviet Union and its clients serves as a powerful ideological weapon to enforce conformity and obedience to the State capitalist institutions, to ensure that the necessity to rent oneself to the owners and managers of these institutions will be regarded as virtually a natural law, the only alternative to the “socialist” dungeon. The Soviet leadership thus portrays itself as socialist to protect its right to wield the club, and Western ideologists adopt the same pretense in order to forestall the threat of a more free and just society. This joint attack on socialism has been highly effective in undermining it in the modern period.⁸

Notice the clever insertion of the words “joint attack” as a device to imply that Soviet and American plotters somehow conspired to undermine the noble ideals of socialism. The idea that the Kremlin leadership took socialism and Communism seriously for many decades, and that the Americans took them at their word regarding their commitment to revolution in the name of those ideologies, does not merit even a moment’s consideration from Chomsky because it would humanize the actors and endanger his storyline about the utter groundlessness of U.S. policies aimed at fighting and winning the Cold War.

This sweeping dismissal of the Soviet worldview as a mere façade was always wrong, and demonstrably so after 1991. Revelations since the fall of the Berlin Wall stubbornly refuse to conform to Chomsky’s dogmatic view of Soviet ideology, and it is now plain that Soviet leaders did, in fact, take Communism seriously. Even someone as palpably unintellectual as Leonid Brezhnev retained an abiding belief in Communism as the foundation of the Soviet state. (When discussing Soviet policy in Africa, he once exclaimed to his inner circle: “Why look, even in the jungles they want to live like Lenin!”)⁹ Soviet memoirists have never shied away from admitting that they were motivated by revolutionary Communist ideals—even those who have since repudiated their former faith. Declassified Soviet documents, including minutes of Politburo meetings and other high-level discussions, reveal that Soviet leaders spoke and thought in the

grammar and syntax of their professed ideology. As historian Vojtech Mastny has put it, there was no “double-bookkeeping” in Moscow, with Soviet leaders saying one thing atop Lenin’s tomb or before a Communist Party congress and then privately saying another in closed Kremlin meetings or in the sanctuary of their dachas. Indeed, Mastny points out that some of the most secret Soviet documents were phrased in such formal ideological terms that they “could have been published in *Pravda* without anybody’s noticing.”¹⁰

A poignant and damaging testimony against Chomsky’s overarching cynicism comes from Vietnam. While Chomsky was determined to portray the war there as a brave peasant nationalist struggle against exploitative Westerners, the men fighting the war in the north saw things rather differently. In his memoir *From Enemy to Friend*, former North Vietnamese colonel (and onetime bodyguard of Ho Chi Minh himself) Bui Tin explains why he and his comrades were at war. Ironically, it was the North Vietnamese Communist regime itself that wrenched Tin away from Chomsky’s conception of the war: as a young man he saw it as a nationalist undertaking but was soon taught to know better.

At a later stage, when I had been further educated and indoctrinated by the Communist Party to become a faithful Communist, I saw the struggle as a war waged to protect the whole socialist camp—consisting of the Soviet Union, Communist China, and the Eastern European people’s democracies plus North Korea and Cuba, and later Ethiopia, Nicaragua and Angola—against U.S.-led “imperialist aggression.” At a higher level, we considered the struggle to be the mission of the international proletariat, who was meant to liberate all nations and classes from oppression, injustice, and aggression. We became inebriated with those ideals and threw ourselves into the struggle. Here I am, each of us thought, holding my gun and standing on the very forefront of the socialist camp, of all progressive mankind, fulfilling both my national obligations and my international duty.

Tin adds with understatement, “But I have since come to think differently.”¹¹

Even more damaging is Tin’s revelation about the degree to

which Hanoi went to camouflage its true intentions and to hood-wink gullible Westerners:

The CPV [Communist Party of Vietnam] leaders always did their best to hide the ideology that animated the Vietnam War. They did everything they could to conceal the class nature of the war, the proletarian dictatorship dogma behind it, and the regime's totalitarianism.... The internationalist duty that the CPV arrogates to itself has always been to communize first the whole Indochinese peninsula and then the rest of Southeast Asia.¹²

No "domino theorist" could have put it better. This confession, of course, is something that Chomsky would declare to be cynical propaganda if it came from an American speaker; but coming from one of his own supposed peasant nationalists, it cannot be so easily dismissed.

The idea that Communism was merely a ruse, a mask that Soviet leaders regarded as an expedient and a weapon of mass control, is one of many of Chomsky's images of the Cold War that can no longer be taken seriously by any standard of historical analysis. But he holds tightly to this fiction because it is central to his larger project: to depict the Cold War itself as something without ideological substance, the better to blacken U.S. moves during the conflict by removing them from any context and therefore from reality itself.

Chomsky and the Causes of the Cold War

What caused the Cold War? Chomsky has on occasion quoted historian John Gaddis and others who date the Cold War from the moment of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. This is at first glance an unremarkable choice of date (although most scholars would choose a point closer to the mid-1940s). Many historians have suggested that the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union in that early period constituted the first phase of the Cold War as we later understood it, mostly reflecting America's deep hostility to Bolshevism. There was nothing remarkable about America's enmity to the Russian Revolution, a sentiment that was also shared in Europe. It was an understand-

able reaction, not only because the explicit goal of the Bolshevik project was to overturn the international status quo by violence, but also because of the immediate reality that Lenin's coup pulled Russia out of World War I, an act that cost Western lives when the Germans no longer had an eastern flank to worry about.

But Chomsky chooses 1917 for a different reason, arguing that the Western attitude to the USSR after 1945 reflected a deep-rooted animus based on economic hostility that had little to do with the nature of the early Soviet regime. He also focuses on 1917 because it allows him to parrot one of the great Soviet propaganda stories of the Cold War period: that the United States tried to invade Russia, and that it was Moscow, not the people of Europe or anywhere else, that had a legitimate complaint about national security threats. This is a claim worth examining, because it says much about Chomsky's misuse of history for his own ends.

Technically, the charge of American "invasion" is true but misleading. In 1918, French, American, British and Japanese troops entered remote Russian port cities with the intention of keeping Russia in the war and Allied munitions in those locales safe, hoping as well to aid those fighting for the downfall of the Bolsheviks. (U.S. involvement was also spurred by the American public's affection for the strange story of the "Czech Legion," a complicated tale of an imperial Russian military unit composed of foreign prisoners of war.) The military operations themselves, however, were desultory and confused affairs, with the Allied powers unable to agree even among themselves about why they were in Russia or what they were supposed to do once there. President Woodrow Wilson was apparently moved to send troops to the Russian Far East less to keep an eye on the Bolsheviks—who of course were not within a thousand miles of the area—than on the Imperial Japanese, who had taken the liberty of landing significant numbers of troops in the area during the revolutionary chaos. Most of this small Western force of some fifteen thousand men ended up doing very little, and by April 1919 would already start coming back home.

Chomsky commonly refers to this ill-considered and con-

fused intervention in Russia as the “western invasion of the Soviet Union” (itself an inaccuracy, as the “Soviet Union” did not exist at that time), implying that this marked the true start of the Cold War. Isolating the issue from its context, he carefully avoids any consideration of whether the Bolsheviks’ stated aim of destroying the international status quo through revolution, to say nothing of their withdrawal from an ongoing world war, had something to do with the Western attitude toward Bolshevism or with the Allied intervention itself. Thus Chomsky takes a small episode (at least in the context of World War I) and tries to spin a large story from it, arguing that early hostility to the Bolsheviks was attributable entirely to the imperialism of Western leaders and not to the actual behavior of the Bolshevik regime itself. In short, Chomsky’s depiction of the intervention in revolutionary Russia is so ahistorical that it can only be assumed he is gambling that his readers are ignorant of the facts of the event, and that they will accept his version of it rather than pick up a history book.

It is more than a little revealing to note that Chomsky is eager to discuss the 1918 Allied intervention in Russia, but shows no interest in the Bolshevik attempt at a revolutionary invasion of Poland only two years later. In the wake of World War I, the Poles had seized lands to their east (mostly in modern-day Ukraine) to which they laid historical claim. The Bolsheviks attacked, not only to recapture the territory but, in Lenin’s words, to “probe with bayonets Poland’s readiness for social revolution,” and to “help the sovietization of Lithuania and Poland,” with eventual hopes of moving onward to Germany and the rest of Europe.¹³ This was no mere border dispute; as Soviet armies advanced on Warsaw, Lenin was so delighted that he sent a secret cable to Stalin saying, “it is time to encourage revolution in Italy. My view is that for this to happen, Hungary must be sovietized, and maybe also the Czech lands and Romania. This has to be carefully thought out. Send your detailed conclusions.”¹⁴ This adventure ended in a disastrous military defeat for the Soviets and the eventual signing of a peace treaty shortly thereafter.

Thus, while Chomsky regards a small and ineffective Allied

action in the midst of a world war as crucial evidence of American hostility, he apparently sees nothing significant about the Soviets in a violent bid to extend Bolshevism to Europe during peacetime. American actions are central and defining, while Soviet thuggery is only a trivial detail with which he need not trouble his readers.

In the end, Chomsky is forced to distort history in order to serve his insistent argument that America has always been a fundamentally hostile power, ever alert to threats to its preeminence. More important, pushing back the origins of the Cold War also allows him to dismiss the Soviet role in the intensified Soviet-American hostilities after 1945, which he sees as merely the second round in Washington's ongoing attempts to punish and subvert any system that dares to defy the exercise of U.S. power. If America, his reasoning goes, was implacably hostile to the Soviet regime in 1917 for essentially imperialistic reasons, then why take seriously any argument that the development of later U.S. foreign policy had anything to do with countering the brutal behavior and expansionist objectives of the USSR after 1945?

Chomsky's dismissal of the notion that the Soviet Union posed a threat in the wake of the Second World War relies heavily on the work of revisionist scholars like Melvin Leffler and Walter LaFeber, but he goes far beyond standard Cold War revisionism. For Chomsky, the Cold War was nothing less than a calculated American reaction to the possibility that the Soviet Union could thwart Washington's plans for a hostile corporate takeover of the planet:

Turning to the superpower conflict itself, it is true enough that by its very nature, the USSR constituted an unacceptable challenge. Specifically, its autarkic command economy interfered with US plans to construct a global system based on (relatively) free trade and investment, which, under the conditions of mid-century, was expected to be dominated by US corporations and highly beneficial to their interests, as indeed it was. The challenge became still more intolerable as the Soviet empire barred free Western access to other areas. The Iron Curtain deprived the capitalist industrial power of a region that was expected to provide

raw materials, investment opportunities, markets, and cheap labor. These facts alone laid the basis for the superpower conflict, as serious analysts were quite well aware.¹⁵

And there it is: the Cold War happened because the Soviet Union was an obstacle to America's capitalist pillaging of the world. "The so-called Communist regimes," Chomsky has written, "are invariably enemies...not because they are founded on coercion and terrorize their populations, but because they separate themselves from the U.S. dominated world system and attempt to use their resources for their own development."¹⁶

In this version, the Soviets carry little blame for the Cold War because they are nothing but a group of co-conspirators cynically mouthing Communist platitudes in order to indoctrinate and enslave their own people. Chomsky did admit that "the Soviet government is a major threat to anyone within the reach of its power—including its own citizens," but then quickly added that "this reach is far more restricted than Western ideologists have alleged over the years."¹⁷ (This will no doubt come as a revelation to people in former Soviet outposts like Ethiopia, for whom the Soviet reach seemed quite capable.) The Americans supposedly knew that their fellow cynics in the Politburo posed no revolutionary threat to other peaceful nations, just as they knew that their own objective was hegemony, not freedom; thus it was merely propaganda from the start for U.S. leaders to posit any difference between the democratic West and states that we now know were little better than prison camps with flags. For Chomsky, it is impossible that any iota of principle, much less a prudent reaction to a real threat, was involved in the Western opposition to a revolutionary state whose professed aim was to transform the world and do for everyone what it had already done for the unlucky residents of Warsaw, East Berlin, Pyongyang, Havana and other punished places.

Chomsky's "Scholarship"

It is worth taking a moment here to peer inside Chomsky's methods, and particularly his abuse of scholarly apparatus. In the

passage cited above, for example, where he notes the agreement of “serious analysts” with his view of the origins of the Cold War; he attempts to gussy up that assertion with a veneer of scholarship and resorts to careful misdirection in the process. The “serious analysts” remain unnamed, but apparently among them was “a prestigious study group” that made points similar to his in an “important 1955 document on the political economy of US foreign policy.” This phrasing—especially the use of the word “document”—seems to indicate a widely read report, perhaps even an official government study of some sort. But a check on Chomsky’s footnote for all this finds that he is referring to a 1955 book edited by Harvard professor William Yandell Elliot, which Chomsky himself refers to in the footnote not as an “important document” but rather as an “important and generally ignored study.”¹⁸

This is a recurring problem in trying to untangle the deceptiveness (and plain sloppiness) of Chomsky’s work. His admirers often cite the huge numbers of footnotes in his pages as proof of his impeccable scholarship. But the copious references are there to create a kind of pseudo-academic smog; many of them are repetitive, and many more are so vague as to be useless. Quite often, his citations regarding a contentious point only lead the reader back self-referentially to another of Chomsky’s own works in which he makes the same unsupported assertion, and not to some piece of original evidence or to an analysis built on original evidence, as would be expected in a normal footnote.

For example, in *World Orders Old and New*, his first note in his chapter on the Middle East reads: “For sources where not given here, see *Deterring Democracy*, chap. 1; *Year 501*, chap. 2.”¹⁹ An intrepid reader seeking to follow Chomsky’s trail in this footnote will find that very little of the first chapter in Chomsky’s own *Deterring Democracy* is actually about the Middle East. But when he does turn to a discussion of the region (and energy policy) in that book, his first footnote in the section reads: “For references and further discussion, see *Towards a New Cold War*.” In other words, a reference in Chomsky’s book points only to two more of his own books, which in turn leads to a citation that refers to yet another of his books, along with four other books on the Middle

East, all of which are cited in their *entirety*, without page references.²⁰ Thus, to track Chomsky's sources in just one footnote, the reader must follow a trail of two more useless citations that lead only to a dead end in which Chomsky cites himself at length.

As a strategy for creating a Potemkin village of intellectual authenticity, this is brilliant; as scholarship it is charlatanism.

Indeed, tracking this sort of "scholarship" is to play a kind of parlor game with the author. For example, after offering the labyrinthine footnotes discussed above, Chomsky quotes the U.S. Department of State describing the Middle East as a "stupendous source of strategic power...the richest economic prize in the world." But this time, for some reason, he does so without any citation to the actual source of the comment, a rather startling omission.²¹ A reader who might wish to know more about the provenance of that State Department pronouncement thus has no idea who made the statement, when it was made or in what context, or even where to find it to read in its original form.

Some of this may perhaps be attributable to carelessness, but there is a certain arrogance as well in the lack of specificity in Chomsky's notes; making a contentious point and then referring to five entire books at a time, including his own, is not only evasive, it is insulting to the reader. Again, when Chomsky cites a White House report to Congress in a chapter of *World Orders Old and New*, his note points only to an untitled *New York Times* article, leaving unclear whether he was citing the report itself or a secondary interpretation of it, and leaving open the question of whether he himself had even bothered to read a source that he was citing as a primary document.²² Another of his notes reads simply: "State Department memorandum of conversation," but with no date, source or other identifying information. It is difficult to tell if Chomsky read the actual document, a précis, a paraphrase or a summary—or to ascertain whether such a document even exists.²³ Yet another footnote suggests that evidence in a U.S. government document is "falsified," but offers only a reference back to the footnote right above it, which in turn refers (of course) to a chapter of one of Chomsky's other works in its entirety—whose footnote on the subject contains no mention of

falsification.²⁴ Thus Chomsky manages the hat trick of creating three empty references, none of which supports his original assertion.

As a scientist, Chomsky surely knows that one of the purposes of a footnote is to allow the reader to replicate the author's research. His notes, however, often obfuscate more than they explain, and in many cases seem to exist only as a marketing device meant to raise the reader's awareness of Chomsky's other books. His works are larded with these useless and silly references in an attempt to give them the appearance, but not the substance, of scholarship—an understandable strategy given the regularity with which he bends and distorts evidence in order to shoehorn it into his overarching narrative of American evil.

Chomsky and America's Blame for the Cold War

Central to Chomsky's narrative is that the true sources of the Cold War lay in insatiable American greed and an unquenchable American thirst for empire. For Chomsky, the Cold War is like Voltaire's image of God: something U.S. policymakers would have had to invent if it hadn't already existed. A good example of Chomsky's cynicism about motives and ideals, and America's subsequent culpability, can be found in his discussions of the events of the early postwar years, and particularly in his fixation on a now-famous American document called NSC-68.

NSC-68 was written in 1950 by the State Department Policy Planning staff under the supervision of Paul Nitze, who would emerge as one of America's most renowned statesmen and diplomats. It was a stark warning that although America had won the war against Germany and Japan, it was in danger of losing the peace to Stalinist Russia. NSC-68 came in the wake of a series of increasingly ominous events over the previous five years, which were marked not only by the Soviet capture of Eastern Europe but also by the crisis with the USSR over its troops in Iran, the Greek civil war, the Berlin blockade, the victory of the Chinese Communists, and the detonation of the first Soviet atom bomb. It is unquestionably an alarmist document, and understandably so, as Americans had much to be alarmed about in 1950.

For Chomsky, however, NSC-68 is not about national security in the face of these real-world developments, but about propaganda and domestic control, with no relationship to external events. (This is also the document Chomsky claimed had “falsified” evidence in it.) After dismissing any possibility that the Soviets posed a real threat, or even that American policymakers were sincere in their *perception* of a threat, Chomsky retreats to the tiresome economic determinism that is his hallmark:

By 1950, the early postwar programs were flagging and the fears of depression, loss of export markets, and an independent course in Western Europe...were once again on the ascendant. These provide the background for NSC 68 (April 1950), a report to the National Security Council proposing a vast militarization of the economy.... The exaggeration of the Soviet threat reaches hysterical proportions, though the use to which it is put is highlighted by the simultaneous recognition of Soviet weakness by the drafters. The document proposed to overcome domestic economic problems by the familiar device of military Keynesianism and [undermining Western European economic independence by binding Europe to America with military ties].²⁵

Not only is this a misinterpretation of NSC-68, it removes this important document from any historical context. Soviet “weakness,” for example, was understood by American policymakers in this period to be a temporary effect of the devastation of World War II, with the real issue being the rate of Soviet recovery; in any case, as wounded as the USSR was, it was far more powerful than Western Europe, which in fact was nearly helpless at the time. This was so obvious a fact that even Stalin recognized it.²⁶

But context, as we have seen, is not Chomsky’s strong suit. For example, after discussing U.S. “rollback” operations against the Soviet Union in which the CIA inserted agents into Eastern Europe to work with indigenous opposition forces, he adds: “All this provides an interesting backdrop to NSC 68, as do U.S. actions in Greece, Korea, and elsewhere in the late 1940s.” Soviet actions and other world events, apparently, provide no backdrop at all. He then wonders what the U.S. reaction would be if the Soviets were supporting insurgents in the hills of Colorado or in

Puerto Rico—as though the agents of expansionist Communist tyranny and those of a democracy must be held in complete moral equivalence.²⁷ (Then again, Chomsky once referred to “the needless humiliation” of Nikita Khrushchev during the Cuban missile crisis, a phrase so strange, given the historical circumstances of the event, that it defies further analysis.)²⁸

NSC-68 figures prominently in Chomsky’s view of the Cold War for good reason. It is written in an urgent, imperative tone, and does in fact call for huge defense expenditures. Yet Chomsky carefully ignores the fact that NSC-68 initially had little impact in the Truman administration. It took an outrageous act of Communist aggression in Korea, two months after the report came out, to make NSC-68 look more prophetic than hypothetical. Chomsky, of course, glides past this inconvenient reality and even argues that later U.S. policies were really just Machiavellian attempts to repeat the alleged successes of NSC-68 in suppressing the masses at home.

In a discussion, for example, of Jimmy Carter’s late 1970s “crusade” for human rights—a noble if poorly executed idea by a diplomatically maladroit administration—Chomsky quotes NSC-68 in a labored attempt to draw a parallel between that document and Carter’s policies, exhibiting a bottomless cynicism that dismisses out of hand Carter’s deeply personal and religious commitment to human rights:

The domestic impact [of Carter’s “Human Rights Crusade”] was generally as hoped, and it is currently believed that the process has advanced sufficiently so that the alleged Russian effort “to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world” (NSC 68) can once again be used to whip the population into line in support of the classic measures of militarization of the economy, subversion, and intervention.²⁹

Note again the careful, deceptive use of the passive voice: things went “generally as hoped” and now other things are “currently believed,” but there are no citations to any sources or persons who might have been doing the hoping and believing. Chomsky simply wishes to tell a story in which any foreign policy of the United States, even one as unarguably idealistic as a

commitment to human rights, is nothing more than another plot by the ruling class.

Chomsky attempts all this by taking pains to surgically excise American actions from their historical circumstances. He writes, for example, that “by 1978 the Carter Administration was moving towards a program of militarizing the economy, and the events of 1979—the [Iranian] hostage crisis and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan—were exploited to help overcome the ‘Vietnam syndrome’ and to lay the basis for a more aggressive and confrontationist stance.” He notes that this was received “with dismay abroad,” but as evidence for this assertion he cites only two articles from the leftist *Manchester Guardian*, claiming they expressed a “common European view.”³⁰ The problem, of course, is that this “common view” (and here Chomsky is using his habitual device of trying to create the illusion of wide agreement with himself) is difficult to square with the fact that the Europeans after 1979 proceeded to elect governments, some of them outspokenly anti-Soviet, which then went about strengthening NATO and its nuclear forces, reflecting a more “common view” that the Soviet Union was a dangerous and threatening power after all.

Meanwhile, genuinely alarming events like the seizure of hostages in Tehran by government-sponsored, gun-toting Iranian fanatics or the Soviet brutalization of Afghanistan are brushed away as events that were “exploited” by the United States, not as shocking actions that could be expected to alarm any civilized nation, or for that matter any rational person. Even Jimmy Carter, a man who had campaigned on a platform that decried what he saw as America’s “inordinate fear of Communism,” understood the Soviet army’s first crossing of a border outside the Warsaw Pact as a significant and threatening escalation of Communist aggression, and reacted accordingly. For Chomsky, however, the slaughter of Afghan peasants (and like so many on the Left, his sympathy for the world’s peasantry seems rather selective) as well as the movement of tens of thousands of Soviet troops into a position that would allow them to threaten the Persian Gulf states had no meaning and no larger context. In his world, these were merely additional instances of a clumsy

Soviet leadership blundering into the U.S. crosshairs, creating inadvertent friction between two nearly identical empires.

In reality, Carter's increases in defense programs were a response to growing dismay among the American public, and even within his own party, about the toothlessness of U.S. foreign policy and the increasing reach of the Soviet Union. The American president's belated turn toward greater confrontation with the Soviet Union came after repeated attempts to persuade the Soviets to moderate their behavior both at home and abroad; indeed, even Politburo adviser Georgii Arbatov later lamented that a Soviet lack of restraint contributed to the collapse of détente, precipitating the fall of Carter and the rise of Ronald Reagan.³¹

Chomsky tries to disarm the arguments about the nature of the threat the West faced in these latter years of the Cold War by making the astonishingly inaccurate contention that "the Soviet Union reached the peak of its power by the late 1950s, always far behind the West."³² (He does not explain, by the way, how this can be reconciled with his claims that the writers of NSC-68 knew in 1950 how "weak" the USSR was.) In any case, Chomsky's statement is flatly wrong: Soviet arms programs proceeded apace throughout the 1970s, including fielding the huge SS-18 intercontinental missile and new generations of other weapons. In 1977, the first year of Carter's presidency, the Soviets deployed the SS-20 medium-range missile, a nuclear-armed system capable of reaching most NATO capitals in minutes and so threatening that even the French referred to it as "*la grande menace*."³³ In a famous moment, Carter's exasperated secretary of defense Harold Brown finally described the situation with the Soviets to Congress in 1979 thus: "When we build weapons, they build; when we stop, they nevertheless continue to build."³⁴ By the 1980s, the Soviets were a gigantic military power, dwarfing their capabilities in the 1950s.

Revelations from the former USSR long ago confirmed the Soviet determination behind their massive buildup in the 1970s. Arbatov wrote after the Cold War's end, "The thought of restraint, of moderation in military affairs, was absolutely alien to us.... During those years we were enthusiastically arming ourselves, like binging drunks without any apparent political

need.”³⁵ The more accurate criticism of Jimmy Carter, then, is not that he took steps to strengthen American defense, but that it took him so long to do so.

Likewise, Carter’s human rights campaign was not an invention of the ruling class, but a response to deplorable Soviet behavior. Even before Carter had been sworn in, the Soviets made clear that they would have none of what they regarded as Carter’s sanctimonious talk about human rights. In the winter of 1976–77, they increased pressure on dissidents so intensely that it created a challenge, in the words of a Carter aide, that the new administration “clearly had to react to.” Thus, despite the “perception early in the Carter administration...that the president was going out of his way to ‘put a stick in the Russians’ eye’ on the subject of human rights, it was actually the other way around.”³⁶

The idiom of the American reaction may have been determined by Jimmy Carter’s own deeply held beliefs, but that there was a campaign for human rights at all was a direct result of reprehensible Soviet actions. Chomsky also seems to miss the fact that there was already a larger campaign in progress that predated Carter: the 1974 Helsinki Accords were signed two years before he even took office, increasing the pressure on the USSR to live up to their terms. Unless the process was directed by Carter and his cabal from the Georgia governor’s office, or unless Chomsky is implicitly charging Helsinki negotiators from all over Europe with being patsies for international capitalism, the assertion that the campaign for human rights was a selfish American ploy does not pass the tests of either logic or evidence.

It should be evident from all this that American presidents in Noam Chomsky’s world do not respond to public opinion or enact policies in response to public demand. Rather, they (in league with the shadowy and sinister economic forces who supposedly pull their strings) mold and create public opinion. This, of course, flies in the face of the reality that in Jimmy Carter’s case it is painfully obvious that the president was lagging behind the public mood and trying to catch up before he was replaced, as he eventually was, by a more hawkish candidate—which brings us to a special object of Chomsky’s anger, Ronald Reagan.

Chomsky and Reagan

Looking back at Chomsky's writings during the 1980s, one can only assume that the successes of the Reagan administration must have been deeply painful to him, as his comments on the period are drenched in almost pathological hostility to both Reagan and his successor, George H. W. Bush. To Chomsky, Reagan was a puppet whose "only qualification for the presidency was that he knew how to read the lines written for him by the rich folk"—of course—"who pay well for the service."³⁷ He finds that even to discuss the Reaganites,

it is first necessary to dispel the most vivid images conjured up by the words "Reagan," "Shultz," and "Bush"—images of tortured and mutilated bodies by the tens of thousands in El Salvador and Guatemala and of dying infants in Nicaragua, succumbing once again to disease and malnutrition thanks to the successes in reversing the early achievements of the Sandinistas.³⁸

Amazingly, Chomsky wrote this in 1989, and left it without comment in an anthology that appeared in 1991, a year after the Sandinistas were thrown out of power by the Nicaraguan people themselves as soon as they had the chance to vote.

Chomsky then goes on to replay the hackneyed image of Reagan as a genial boob, with a sneering condescension that undermines his usual scholarly façade:

With regard to the political system, the Reagan era represents a significant advance in capitalist democracy. For eight years the U.S. government functioned virtually without a chief executive. It is quite unfair to assign to Ronald Reagan, the person, much responsibility for the policies enacted in his name...it was hardly a secret that Reagan had only the vaguest conception of the policies of his Administration and, if not properly programmed by his staff, regularly produced statements that would have been an embarrassment, were anyone to have taken them seriously.³⁹

Chomsky uses a phrase like "it was hardly a secret" (again, to whom?) to make it appear as though Reagan's supposed vacuity was a matter of public record, while the only thing that was "hardly a secret" was the loathing that Chomsky and other intellectuals of the Left felt for the fortieth president.

Indeed, Chomsky is so desperate to tarnish the achievements of the 1980s that he is moved, as ever, to rewrite history. The 1983 invasion of Grenada, which deposed a violent socialist dictatorship supported by the USSR and Cuba, and the 1985 bombing of Libya, which helped to take Muammar al-Qaddafi out of the international terrorism business, are both referred to as “military fiascos.”⁴⁰ (They were certainly not seen as such in Moscow, Tripoli or Havana.)⁴¹ He claims that Reagan’s policies were “overwhelmingly” opposed by the American public, although how this overwhelmingly opposed president was able to get reelected in a forty-nine-state electoral landslide is not addressed.⁴²

Chomsky managed to delude himself about the future as well, clinging to a vain belief that Reagan and his policies were far less popular than they were. “Frightened little men,” he wrote in 1989, “may strut in awe of their cowboy hero, but the general public seems more opposed to violent intervention than before and—I hope, though I do not know—more committed to acting to block it.”⁴³ Given the actual *increase* after the 1980s in the American public’s willingness to use force to attempt to put things right in places like Bosnia, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq, one can only imagine Chomsky’s increased anger at an American public that keeps stubbornly refusing (from false consciousness, perhaps?) to take his radical advice. It cannot be a comfort to Chomsky to look back nearly twenty years and realize that rather than vilify Ronald Reagan, many people would rather name major airports and government buildings after him.

More to the point, Chomsky’s attempt to depict Reagan as a disconnected dunce has since been thoroughly discredited by the historical record. The truth is that whether one applauds or deplors the direction of the Reagan years, the most important policies of the Reagan administration came directly from the president himself, often against the counsel of his advisors. Perhaps most important is what scholar Beth Fischer has dubbed “the Reagan reversal,” the 1983–84 American attempt to reduce tensions with the USSR. Fischer has shown that this change in policy came not from Mikhail Gorbachev in later years, but from the American president beginning late in 1983, after he became

convinced that the situation between the superpowers had grown so tense that there was an actual danger of nuclear war.⁴⁴

In fact, Reagan's personal influence in this matter prompted one of the worst speeches of his presidency, his 1984 State of the Union address. The president took an active hand in the speech, and for once the Great Communicator bombed onstage. It contained a maudlin passage that Reagan had wanted included where he imagined some ordinary Soviets and Americans meeting by chance and realizing how much they had in common:

And as they went their separate ways, maybe Anya would be saying to Ivan, "Wasn't she nice? She also teaches music." Or Jim would be telling Sally what Ivan did or didn't like about his boss. They might even have decided they were all going to get together for dinner some evening soon. Above all, they would have proven that people don't make wars.⁴⁵

The speech was so bad and the example so saccharine that it prompted one of Reagan's own staffers to exclaim, "Who wrote this shit?"⁴⁶ The answer had to be surprising.

Likewise, it was Reagan himself who nearly agreed at the 1986 Reykjavik summit with Gorbachev to denuclearize the world. Later, national security adviser John Poindexter sputtered that the president couldn't possibly have agreed to that; Reagan replied, "John, I was there, and I did."⁴⁷ And it was Reagan who insisted on including the now-famous challenge to Gorbachev, during a 1987 speech in Berlin, to "tear down this wall"—a phrase to which practically the entire U.S. foreign policy establishment objected at the time, including the State Department and even the National Security Council director, Colin Powell.⁴⁸

The Iran-Contra affair stands as the major example of Reagan as an inattentive president in foreign affairs, and Reagan characteristically took complete responsibility for it after the final report on the matter was issued. But even during the drama of Iran-Contra, he persuaded the Soviets to accept the INF Treaty, which embodied his own 1981 "zero option" for removal of an entire class of nuclear missiles from Europe. The "zero option" was a proposal that was roundly criticized by Reagan's detractors both in the USSR and at home as a propaganda stunt,

but was codified and signed as a treaty six years later owing largely to the president's tenacity.

For Chomsky and his followers, however, none of this mattered and likely never will. It is a point of vested belief, rather than evidence or analysis, that America started the Cold War and exploited it for its own ends, and that Ronald Reagan's successes in the 1980s, like those of his predecessors, were just so much showmanship to distract the masses from the real agenda of a shadowy elite. All that Chomsky can hear from the last days of the Cold War are the screams of Nicaraguan children—the screams of Polish, Afghan, North Korean or Chinese children, of course, are less audible—and those screams indict only Washington, never the fundamentally evil ideology that so often placed innocents in harm's way.

Chomsky and the Cold War's End

The issue is not really whether Ronald Reagan should be given his due as a president or as a Cold War leader. Historians and the American people have already begun to render their judgments on that and other aspects of the Cold War, and it's hard to imagine that Chomsky welcomes their verdict. Rather, the more interesting question lies in the beliefs and fears that are revealed in Chomsky's attacks on America and its leaders during the Cold War, specifically his growing anxiety about the way in which events were making a mockery of sacred leftist dogma. By the end of the 1980s, socialism in all but its most market-friendly varieties was an obvious failure, doomed never again to attain the popularity it had enjoyed in the 1960s and 1970s either as an idea or as an existing form of government. This represented the end of an era for Chomsky, and it seems from some of his works that he understood this even as it was happening.

There is an urgency in Chomsky's writings about this period, and indications of a despair (one he shares with many on the Left), perhaps borne of the realization that history had moved in a direction he had not anticipated. By 1991, new realities shattered radical dreams and predictions: the bold reassertion of Western values of liberty and human dignity in the

endgame of the Cold War was supposed to fail, rejected by the masses who would see through simpletons like Reagan and rise against the corporate elites who controlled him and other democratic leaders in the United States and abroad. America at the end of the Cold War was not supposed to prosper and the Soviet Union was not supposed to fall. The formerly captive nations of the Soviet empire were not supposed to declare their independence and come to Washington to thank the Americans for their help in throwing off their servitude, in the process putting the lie to much of what Noam Chomsky and many others had written for the previous two decades. Humanity itself failed Chomsky's expectations. For millions of formerly enslaved people it was a bright dawn, but for the extreme anti-American Left it was the beginning of a final sunset on their ideas and influence.

Nothing speaks more tellingly of Chomsky's evident hatred of the United States and the values it represents than his reaction to Vaclav Havel's 1990 address to Congress. Standing before the U.S. legislature as the president of a newly free Czechoslovakia, Havel praised the United States and spoke of America and its heritage of freedom as an inspiration to the world. Chomsky, in a letter to journalist Alexander Cockburn, reacted within days to Havel's speech with a fuming tirade that is worth reproducing here at some length. It is a fitting coda to an examination of Noam Chomsky's Cold War writings.

Dear Alex,

As a good and loyal friend, I can't overlook this chance to suggest to you a marvelous way to discredit yourself completely and lose the last minimal shreds of respectability that still raise lingering questions about your integrity. I have in mind what I think is one of the most illuminating examples of the total and complete intellectual and moral corruption of Western culture, namely, the awed response to Vaclav Havel's embarrassingly silly and morally repugnant Sunday School sermon in Congress the other day....

Chomsky then compares Havel—a man once imprisoned for his commitment to liberty—with former Communist hacks in places like Vietnam who mouthed ritual phrases about the superiority of the USSR, and he finds the Czech leader wanting:

I don't mean to equate a Vietnamese villager to Vaclav Havel. For one thing, I doubt that the former would have had the supreme hypocrisy and audacity to clothe his praise for the defenders of freedom with gushing about responsibility for the human race. It's also unnecessary to point out to the half a dozen or so sane people who remain that in comparison to the conditions imposed by US tyranny and violence, East Europe under Russian rule was practically a paradise....

Of course, it could be argued in Havel's defense that this shameful performance was all tongue in cheek, just a way to extort money from the American taxpayer for his (relatively rich) country. I doubt it, however; he doesn't look like that good an actor.

Chomsky ends by encouraging Cockburn to spew similar hatred of Havel in print, a note of rage that provides a glimpse of Chomsky's personal anger at how his own views (notably his fixation on Timor and Cambodia) have not been treated with appropriate respect or devotion in the media:

So, here's the perfect swan song. It's all absolutely true, even truisitic. Writing something that true and significant would also have a predictable effect. The sign of a truly totalitarian culture is that important truths simply lack cognitive meaning and are interpretable only at the level of "Fuck You", so they can then elicit a perfectly predictable torrent of abuse in response. We've long ago reached that level—to take a personal example, consider the statement: "We ought to tell the truth about Cambodia and Timor." Or imagine a columnist writing: "I think the Sandinistas ought to win." I suspect that this case is even clearer. It's easy to predict the reaction to any truthful and honest comments about this episode, which is so revealing about the easy acceptance of (and even praise for) the most monstrous savagery, as long as it is perpetrated by Us against Them—a stance adopted quite mindlessly by Havel, who plainly shares the utter contempt for the lower orders that is the hallmark of Western intellectuals, so at least he's "one of us" in that respect. Anyway, don't say I never gave you a useful suggestion.⁴⁹

While Havel is the immediate target, in reality Chomsky is raging against the world of 1990, a place that emerged as virtually the complete reverse of what he and his followers had hoped

for and expected during a quarter of a century of insistence that the United States was morally indistinguishable from the Soviet Union. This one letter speaks for itself as a more honest expression of Chomsky's views than most of his "scholarly" publications.

In the end, the Cold War came to the miraculous conclusion that it did because people like Vaclav Havel, along with the voters and leaders of the United States, Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and the other allied free nations chose, in effect, to repudiate Noam Chomsky and his fellow radicals. Chomsky had, and continues to have, a sizable audience; but his ideas have so completely defied both common sense and human experience that the populations and governments that prosecuted the Cold War in the name of human liberty were hardly in danger of being influenced by them. The calls to the defense of freedom by people like Havel and Reagan will always trump the sour nihilism of Chomsky's relentless attacks, and in at least some of his writings, he seems to realize it with no small measure of bitterness.

There will be more struggles with would-be totalitarians and tyrants, whether they be Islamic fundamentalist madmen trying to assemble weapons of mass destruction in caves, Chinese dictators seeking to assuage their insecurities with conquest, Iranian mullahs commanding nuclear missiles, or narco-terrorists running their poisons across the world's borders. The United States and its allies will continue to prevail in these coming conflicts if they continue to reject the invitation to self-loathing and eventual self-destruction that Noam Chomsky issued on a regular basis during the Cold War and still issues today. More than a decade after the Soviet flag was lowered from the Kremlin for the last time, it is clear that Chomsky was wrong about the Cold War (as he has been about so many other things), and that his views and writings on it, like Communism itself, are now guaranteed a place in the dustbin of history.

NOTES

The views expressed are those of the author, and not of any agency of the U.S. government. The author wishes to thank Professor Doug Macdonald for his helpful comments and suggestions.

¹ Noam Chomsky, *World Orders Old and New* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 44.

² Noam Chomsky, "The Soviet Union versus Socialism," *Our Generation*, Spring/Summer 1986; online at <http://www.zmag.org/chomsky/articles/86-soviet-socialism.html>.

³ Noam Chomsky, *Rethinking Camelot: JFK, the Vietnam War, and US Political Culture* (Boston: South End Press, 1993), p. 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Noam Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), pp. 24–25.

⁶ Keith Windschuttle, "The Hypocrisy of Noam Chomsky," *New Criterion*, May 2003; online at <http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/21/may03/chomsky.htm>.

⁷ Quoted in Windschuttle, "The Hypocrisy of Noam Chomsky."

⁸ Chomsky, "The Soviet Union versus Socialism."

⁹ Quoted in Thomas M. Nichols, *Winning the World: Lessons for America's Future from the Cold War* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), p. 26.

¹⁰ Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 9.

¹¹ Bui Tin, *From Enemy to Friend* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), pp. 4–5.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

¹³ Quoted in Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin: A New Biography* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), p. 388.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), p. 27.

¹⁶ Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War*, p. 8.

- ¹⁷ Ibid., p. 4.
- ¹⁸ Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy*, p. 66, n. 27.
- ¹⁹ Chomsky, *World Orders Old and New*, p. 316.
- ²⁰ Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy*, p. 68.
- ²¹ Chomsky, *World Orders Old and New*, p. 190.
- ²² Ibid., p. 70.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 316.
- ²⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 302, n. 52.
- ²⁵ Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War*, pp. 21–22.
- ²⁶ “Together,” Stalin told Mao in 1950 at the outset of the Korean War, “we will be stronger than the United States and Great Britain, whereas none of the other European capitalist states...possess any serious military forces at all.” Quoted in Alexandre Mansourov, “Stalin, Mao, Kim, and China’s Decision to Enter the Korean War, Sept. 16–Oct. 15, 1950: New Evidence from Russian Archives,” *Cold War International History Bulletin*, vol. 6–7, online at <http://cwihip.si.edu/>.
- ²⁷ Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War*, p. 23.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 194.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 30.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 16.
- ³¹ Arbatov wrote in 1991: “It must be acknowledged that Reagan ...came to power not without our help.” See Nichols, *Winning the World*, p. 138; and Georgii Arbatov, *Zatianuvsheesia vyzdorovlenie* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia, 1991), p. 241.
- ³² Chomsky, *World Orders Old and New*, p. 80.
- ³³ See James Hanson, *Correlation of Forces* (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 109.
- ³⁴ Quoted in Henry Kissinger, *For the Record: Selected Statements, 1977–1980* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1981), p. 204.
- ³⁵ Arbatov, *Zatianuvsheesia vyzdorovlenie*, pp. 237–38.
- ³⁶ See Robert Strong, *Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), p. 95.
- ³⁷ Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy*, p. 75.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 69.
- ³⁹ Ibid., pp. 73–74.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 86.
- ⁴¹ Soviet commentators thought that Grenada was the beginning of an attempt to destroy the whole socialist system—an accurate prediction, as it turned out. See Nichols, *Winning the World*, p. 183.
- ⁴² Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy*, p. 374.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 86.
- ⁴⁴ See Beth Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), esp. pp. 125–40.

- ⁴⁵ The full text is available at www.reagan.utexas.edu/resource/speeches/1984/11684a.htm.
- ⁴⁶ See Nichols, *Winning the World*, p. 194.
- ⁴⁷ Quoted in John Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Knopf, 1989), p. 396.
- ⁴⁸ The story of the speech's drafting can be found at <http://www-hoover.stanford.edu/publications/digest/974/robinson.html>.
- ⁴⁹ Quoted in Alexander Cockburn, *The Golden Age Is in Us* (New York: Verso, 1995), pp. 149–51.

THREE

CHOMSKY AND THE MEDIA: A KEPT PRESS AND A MANIPULATED PEOPLE

Eli Lehrer

While much of Noam Chomsky's writing on foreign policy issues—such as his 2001 pamphlet *9-11*—has enjoyed significant sales, it's fair to say that no part of his work outside of linguistics has been as influential as his media criticism. Indeed, among his books on topics other than linguistics, the media theory primer *Manufacturing Consent* (co-authored with Edward Herman) is by far the most frequently cited in the popular and academic press.* Chomsky's ideas about media spring from and reinforce his ideas about global politics. They rest on three principal claims:

- ◆ First, all major media are controlled by a small group of corporations and extremely wealthy individuals that are “with rare exceptions...culturally and politically conservative.”¹
- ◆ Second, beginning with World War I, the United States government has run a significant propaganda operation intended to hoodwink the American public and “mobilize support for the

*Chomsky's primary work on media was written with Edward Herman as the first listed author and, one assumes, the primary author. As nearly all of Chomsky's works on the media (including those published under his name alone) draw heavily on *Manufacturing Consent*, it's technically proper to refer to the theories he expresses as “Chomsky and Herman's theories.” For the sake of simplicity, however, I refer to them as Chomsky's theories when not discussing a work produced with a co-author.

[largely right-wing] special interests that dominate the state and political activity.”² The media, likewise, are entirely “undemocratic,” and speak only for the ruling classes.³

- ◆ Third, these propaganda operations, which continue to the present day, have been almost entirely successful: The decisions to publicize certain stories and downplay others are made in ways that “serve political ends” of America’s ruling class.⁴

Collectively, these premises make up what Chomsky calls a “propaganda model.” Blinded and bemused by the filters and screens created by powerful interests, the mainstream media report only facts and stories that serve the interests of the ruling elite. A free press, Chomsky claims, is an illusion cynically perpetuated by the media. The media keep their audience amused, but their chief function is to inculcate the values that compel obedience to the myths sustaining an aggressive and immoral capitalist system. Thus they disseminate propaganda rather than information per se. Chomsky dismisses the sometimes searing exposés of government and corporate misconduct that occasionally appear in the press as mere camouflage for the media’s larger purpose of supporting the basic power arrangements of America’s political and economic life.

This view of the media occupies a central place in Chomsky’s mental universe. He has expounded it in *Manufacturing Consent* and a variety of speeches and pamphlets, all of them illustrated with examples drawn from news coverage between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s. He returns almost obsessively to the subject in books such as *Necessary Illusions* (1989), *Propaganda and the Public Mind* (2001) and *Media Control* (2002).

Chomsky’s ideas about the media are probably the most quoted but least plausible of his “theories.” His analysis is very much that of an outsider who knows relatively little about the media and has scant interest in the subject except to the degree that “media subservience” serves to explain why there is no outcry against the evil he sees everywhere in the American enterprise. His theories are based on illogical, flawed or fallacious arguments. He makes factual errors with alarming frequency, writes in a way that tends to mislead his audience, and makes sweeping statements without any evidence to support them. Many of his ideas about the media and how they operate

in American society contradict each other sharply. As in his writings about world affairs, he makes highly selective use of evidence. His assertions about media control seem increasingly antique in the information age because they show ignorance of technological advances such as the Internet and changes in consumer taste, which Chomsky ignores, misunderstands or summarily dismisses.



Chomsky's notion of a "kept" media propagandizing in behalf of a power elite suffers from two major intellectual inconsistencies.

First, the "propaganda model" posits, on one hand, that a small clique of profit-oriented companies controls the media. But at the same time, it insists that they exercise this control to advance political rather than commercial ends. Aside from simply asserting that the media are all "corporate"—and assuming that this term alone conveys a sufficiently malign purpose—Chomsky does nothing to show how being owned by a corporation leads to a desire to advance particular political views. Corporations, after all, exist primarily to make profits. Among the national newspapers, the *New York Times* takes positions well to the left of center, *USA Today* and the *Washington Post* are slightly more moderate, and the *Wall Street Journal* is roughly as far to the right as the *New York Times* is to the left. If Chomsky's propaganda model held, one would expect the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* editorial pages to agree on most major topics; instead, they agree on virtually nothing.

Gannett, the single largest owner of newspapers in the United States, provides a good example of the one-dimensionality of Chomsky's critique. It's fair to say that at its core, this is a liberal company, requiring a vigorous affirmative action program in all of its newsrooms. Its flagship publication, *USA Today*, is a national paper with a left-of-center editorial page. But its two largest community newspapers, the *Detroit News* and the *Arizona Republic*, have conservative editorial pages.

Even the magnates who own large media empires have vastly divergent views: Ted Turner is a left-winger who gives lavishly to the United Nations and other "progressive" causes and

hates George Bush, while Rupert Murdoch gives his support mostly to the Liberal Party in Australia, Tories in the U.K. and Republicans in the United States, and is generally regarded as pro-Bush. While some media CEOs do see their companies as soapboxes for personal views, most do not. For instance, Time Warner CEO Richard Parsons is a Republican who worked in the Nixon White House, but his company's publications show little ideological consistency, with most of them falling slightly to the left of center.

The politics of a media outlet's ownership, moreover, do not necessarily correlate with the opinions expressed in that media outlet. To the extent that media owners impose their own politics, there's little consistency in the politics they impose. Nearly all of the major media companies that Chomsky attacks have several thousand shareholders of record; it seems difficult to believe that many owners would put politics ahead of profit and risk suffering a shareholder revolt. But that's exactly what Chomsky's model says they would do. Typically, he provides no evidence for this assertion.

The second major inconsistency in the "propaganda model" stems from Chomsky's assertion that the media fail to represent the people's interests and instead pander to their base desires (for sensationalism, celebrity, etc.). But if the media exist to propagandize in behalf of specific right-wing interests inimical to the common good, then how could they simultaneously pander to the people? If the media provide nothing but bread and circuses—nothing more than "an obsessive focus on the O. J. Simpson trial, the Lewinsky scandal, and the deaths of two of the West's super celebrities, Princess Diana and John F. Kennedy Jr.," in Chomsky's words—then how can they simultaneously move public opinion on major world events?⁵ If the real news doesn't get covered, then how can people be manipulated by what isn't even written about or broadcast?



In nearly all of his work on media, Chomsky invokes the name of the prestigious political commentator of the last generation, Wal-

ter Lippmann, who coined the term “manufactured consent.” According to Chomsky, Lippmann believed that the media’s new techniques of propaganda could make the public believe that it wanted things it really didn’t want.⁶ But the idea that the people simply couldn’t be trusted in a democracy and needed a highly specialized class of elite experts to guide (and hoodwink) them is a distorted version of what Lippmann actually thought. (Typically, although Lippmann is central to his own theories, Chomsky spends very little time analyzing his writing and *never* quotes him directly at any length.)

In fact, Lippmann believed modern society had become so complex that people could not keep track of all the complicated issues involved in governance: “Only in the very simplest cases does an issue present itself in the same form spontaneously and approximately at the same time to all the members of a public.”⁷ What Lippmann argued is, in effect, a basic truth of representative government: people cannot make *every* decision about public policy for themselves. Individual nonexpert citizens should not, for example, supervise meat inspection or order troops into combat. Instead, they should try to learn about the issues from people who are expert in them and then rely on this set of experts to make informed choices about which experts should govern the nation.

The government of a democracy, Lippmann believed, “manufactures consent” only in that it tends to limit the choices available to the citizenry to those that actually make sense. Since direct democracy is impossible, it is necessary that there be experts and that the range of opinion considered be based on expertise in the issues under consideration. The resulting consent of the governed—after due deliberation among competing views—is “manufactured” only in the sense that the debate is limited to informed opinions and to technically expert representatives of those informed opinions.

All this is common sense about the way in which representative democracy differs from direct democracy—particularly in a modern, bureaucratized state. There’s nothing especially startling, let alone sinister, about this conclusion. But Chomsky has twisted Lippmann’s analysis so that it appears to support the

notion of a class conspiracy to brainwash the public into stupefied submission. In other words, Chomsky conscripts Lippmann into his own version of Marx's discredited idea of a "false consciousness," in which a capitalist ruling class cleverly induces people to act robotically against their own interests.

According to Chomsky, any hope of establishing an authentically American democracy ended in 1918 when Woodrow Wilson established the Creel Commission, a small federal board charged with studying public opinion about the war. (Walter Lippmann was one of its members.) The commission, Chomsky claims, turned a peace-loving public into "raving anti-German fanatics."⁸ As a result of its success, the American ruling class was able to manipulate the public into supporting America's entry into World War I. Since then, the corporate militarists have continued to triumph by forcing people to believe what they really don't (or at least shouldn't, given their class allegiances).

Characteristically, Chomsky does not even bother to acknowledge, let alone analyze, the events to which most historians attribute American entry into World War I: the sinking of the cruise ship *Lusitania* by the Germans and, more importantly, the "Zimmerman memorandum," a secret note to the Mexican government in which Germany offered to help Mexico "reconquer the lost territory in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona" in return for its "support of a German war effort against the United States."

Is it possible that the disclosure of this German offer and the killing of over a thousand American tourists might have done more to induce a change of mind than all the efforts of the Creel Commission? It would be hard to find an expert on the subject who regarded the Creel Commission as the precipitating factor—or even a major contributing factor—in American entry into World War I. B. H. Liddell Hart's *The Real War: 1914–1918*, for instance, considered the definitive one-volume work on the war, devotes only a few lines to the commission's work.⁹



The disregard for evidence in *Manufacturing Consent* is so

omnipresent and relentless that I decided to focus only on some of the claims that Chomsky and co-author Herman make in the introduction to the book, where they present their theory of a “propaganda model.”

The first assertion Chomsky and Herman make is that the United States government advertised claims about an alleged delivery of Soviet MiG fighter jets to Nicaragua to distract American public opinion from the elections that the Sandinistas were holding in 1984—elections which would disarm Washington’s claims that it was a dictatorship. Now, it does appear that the Nicaraguan regime never did get the planes. But two facts undermine the theory that this story was merely manipulative propaganda and not reasonable reporting. First, according to *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, King Publications’ widely read news update for defense contractors, MiGs had, indeed, been in Nicaragua prior to the allegations—and the U.S. government had spy photographs to prove it.¹⁰ Second, Yuri Pavalov, head of the Soviet Union’s Latin American office at the time, admitted that the Nicaraguan government *wanted* to acquire the planes in order to destabilize the region. He told an interviewer from George Washington University’s National Security Archive:

As for MiGs they might be useful to intimidate Nicaraguan neighbors like the Hondurans, but again it wasn’t a thought in Moscow that it would help much the Sandinista cause to antagonize these neighbors.... Another fact of course was that the leaders in Moscow did not want to provoke the United States into giving more military aid to the contras and to the Honduran government, because to supply MiGs to the Sandinista government would have immediately led to US government reinforcing Honduran air forces.... And therefore these requests were politely denied every time the Sandinistas brought it up in Moscow.¹¹

In other words, while the reports turned out to be wrong about the specifics, the fact was that the Sandinista government was intent on acquiring MiGs, which in the circumstances was eminently newsworthy. The MiG affair, therefore, was hardly a propaganda-motivated distraction from the elections as Chomsky and Herman contend. Rather, it was a major story that the American media were right to cover.

Chomsky and Herman go on to discuss and document the consolidation of media properties and decry this development as a threat to media diversity, arguing that media giants are “owned and controlled by quite wealthy people.” Their data are from 1986; less than half the companies they name exist in anything close to the same form today. By their own count, moreover, even in 1986 ownership was not primarily held by the wealthy people who were running the companies: in only 6 of the 24 companies listed did the people controlling the company own more than 50 percent of the stock. Therefore, the major beneficiaries of media profits at the time were the individuals who held the stock, not all of whom were “very wealthy.” Gannett, for example, has over half a million stockholders currently on record. The idea that only the rich benefit from media profitability is indefensible.

Chomsky and Herman also claim that the need for broadcast media entities to get licenses from the government has been “used as a club to discipline the media, and media policies that stray too often from an establishment orientation.” To document this assertion, they cite three sources, all of which deal only with the Nixon administration’s treatment of the media, primarily with regard to national television newscasts. If these sources are accurate, the most that can be said is that fifteen years before Chomsky and Herman wrote their book, the government occasionally used licensing powers to harass three major television networks. The two authors do not even *allege* any widespread pattern of using media regulations to cow the networks, and they say nothing about other media. They also say nothing about what happened in other administrations: did Ford, Carter or Reagan do anything to bludgeon the media? Reagan surely did not: in fact, by abolishing the Federal Communications Commission’s “fairness doctrine” requiring that broadcast media to give “equal time” to multiple sides in news coverage, he eliminated any federal power to regulate news content and thus substantially freed the press from governmental interference.

Midway through the Introduction to *Manufacturing Consent*, the authors get to the claim that the media as a whole are “culturally and politically conservative,” an assertion that is at the core of the book. According to them, this results from the

influence of advertisers. In all of Chomsky's work on media theory, this is the only place where he provides any evidence for this frequently repeated claim. The evidence amounts to quotations from two advertisers, both more than ten years old when he cited them. One is alleged to originate with Procter & Gamble (although Chomsky and Herman do not cite a source); it claims that the corporation wants its programming to present a generally positive view of business.¹² The second quotation, attributed to General Electric, says more or less the same thing. These statements provide no evidence that the companies are *conservative*, but simply that they want the programming that carries their ads to refrain from attacking business. And probably with good reason. It appears that entertainment programming in general (the subject at least one of the companies is concerned about) is *anti-business*. In a 1982 study, Robert and Linda Lichter, working with Stanley Rothman, found that businessmen are usually villains in entertainment programming: they are three times more likely than members of any other profession to be depicted as criminals, and nine times out of ten are presented as being motivated primarily by greed.¹³ In any case, even if the quotations that Chomsky and Herman present gave solid evidence that business is conservative—and they don't do that—they offer no evidence that a conservative bias affects public-affairs programming.

Nor is there any evidence that the two corporations Chomsky and Herman cite—Procter & Gamble and GE—are conservative in a cultural sense. Today, the Human Rights Campaign's scorecard gives them highly positive ratings for prohibiting discrimination against gay employees, providing health benefits for their partners, and sponsoring gay employee groups.¹⁴ A review of political action committee records shows that GE has typically given roughly equal amounts to Democrats and Republicans (with more Democrats getting large contributions), while Procter & Gamble has tended to favor Republicans.¹⁵ Both companies, however, appear to give to politicians based on which party is dominant in regions where they have major facilities—GE gives heavily in mostly Democratic New England and New York, while Procter & Gamble gives most

heavily in Republican-leaning Ohio. In other words, the evidence seems to show that these companies are socially liberal and interested in supporting politicians who represent the areas where they operate. If GE and Procter & Gamble represent corporate America, there is little evidence that corporate America is conservative.

Finally, Chomsky and Herman assert that “business corporations and trade groups are also regular and credible purveyors of stories deemed newsworthy.” This claim can’t be refuted as such: reporters do get stories from business corporations and trade groups, but they also get stories from academia, nonprofits, elected officials, and individual citizens who call in with stories. Business reporters obviously do get most of their stories from businesses, but they often write stories that are highly critical of business. Would the tobacco industry, for example, have paid billions in settlements were it not for the continual drubbing from television shows like *60 Minutes* and from the editorial pages of every major newspaper in the country? CEOs of companies ranging from Kmart to Morrison Knudsen have lost their jobs on the basis of unflattering media reports. Indeed, this is the kind of story that makes reputations and wins awards; no reporter has ever won an award or gotten a promotion for a fawning profile of a local CEO. And nonbusiness reporters don’t rely on business for many stories: how often, if ever, has the CEO of General Motors been quoted giving his opinion on a war or an election? In fact, most companies and trade associations rarely if ever take positions on issues that do not directly concern their members or their product. The few that do (Unilever’s subsidiary Ben & Jerry’s, which is liberal; and Amway, which is conservative, are examples) often make their politics a clear part of their product pitch. If anything, of those companies with clear political views, rather more appear to lean left than right. For instance, Working Assets Long Distance, a substantial telephone service provider with a clearly left-wing social mission, has no counterpart on the Right.



Chomsky’s analysis employs an extremely limited subset of

sources, ignores changes in the media landscape (most glaringly, the Internet), and uses primarily non-American examples to make a case about American conditions. His database leaves out most national newspapers, nearly all magazines, all television and all wire services. With a few exceptions, he appears to use only newspaper sources available in the computerized Nexis database (and other databases) when analyzing the American media. Nexis does not contain the *Wall Street Journal*, and when Chomsky and Herman wrote *Manufacturing Consent* in the mid-1980s, it did not contain *USA Today* either. This is, to say the least, a significant omission, since the *Wall Street Journal* sells more copies than any other Monday-through-Friday paper, while *USA Today* sells the most copies overall.

The newspaper sources that Chomsky cites—primarily the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*—were until 1985 available only to people who lived in certain metropolitan areas. While he alludes to the growing power of cable television at several points in his media critiques, Chomsky cites CNN only to criticize it briefly, even though the network is the first to report most major stories.¹⁶ Likewise, he ignores wire service accounts, which by his own description are the primary sources of foreign news for most Americans. Local television news, the main source of news for the majority of Americans, might as well not even exist.¹⁷

The Internet is the most important news source to become available after Chomsky wrote *Manufacturing Consent*, but he has ignored it almost entirely in his speaking and pamphleteering on the media since then. He cites few websites, even in writings as recent as 2002. His overall grasp of the Internet seems exceptionally poor, bordering on negligent for someone who has set himself up as a modern media theorist. In one instance, he appears to think that America Online is an Internet portal (it's a service provider); in another, he claims that Internet hardware has been "privatized" (in fact, much of the underlying infrastructure is still publicly owned or in the hands of public or heavily subsidized universities, and very little of what's currently in private hands was ever publicly owned); and he says that only "sizeable commercial entities" have run successful Internet

sites.¹⁸ This last, of course, is absurd and leaves out—to take one glaring example—The Drudge Report, whose newsbreaks so affected the Clinton impeachment process.

Chomsky fails to mention weblogs, Internet radio, or dozens of other new manifestations of Internet media. He also writes almost nothing about radio news, despite the massive consolidation of radio station ownership under a few large media umbrellas, a trend that might actually support his thesis about conspiratorial control of the news outlets if he ever could really establish that ownership determines reportage. He also ignores talk radio, probably because the tone and content of most talk-radio shows appear to prove that conservative ideas have a popular following, a fact that undermines his overall thesis of an intrinsically leftist public lulled into compliant uniformity by a right-wing ruling class.

By his own admission, Chomsky is so ignorant about pop culture that he has rarely even known who was playing in the Super Bowl.¹⁹ Without studying this aspect of his subject at all, however, he dismisses all entertainment and sports programming as well as much news coverage as mere “bread and circuses” intended to distract the bewildered herd from the true state of the world.²⁰ Ironically, if he bothered to look at pop culture he would find much support for left-wing politics: one of Chomsky’s biggest personal followings is the audience for the groups Pearl Jam and Rage Against the Machine, which have acknowledged his influence on their politics and even their music. Nearly all explicitly political television series—*The West Wing* is a prime example—have strongly left-liberal politics.

Chomsky would no doubt say with his usual hauteur that all these specifics are too mundane for him to take notice of and account for in his theory. But it’s always the small, inconvenient detail that trips up the grand plan.



On top of these deficiencies in *Manufacturing Consent*, *Media Control*, *Necessary Illusions* and other writings on media, Chomsky relies almost exclusively on foreign policy examples in

drawing conclusions about media reporting as such. Except for a three-page discussion about supposedly declining standards of living in the United States in *Manufacturing Consent*, Chomsky and Herman write about the media almost as if domestic politics did not exist. Between the fall of the Berlin Wall and 9/11, however, national polls indicate that few Americans put foreign policy among their top ten concerns. Despite having written more than 250,000 words on the media, Chomsky has yet to produce a single essay examining coverage of domestic affairs in any detail. If there is a massive media conspiracy to undermine the interests of the working class, wouldn't this be most clearly apparent in reportage of domestic events?²¹ Instead, Chomsky focuses on events in Kosovo, (prewar) Iraq and Latin America. Chomsky and Herman engage in a lengthy discussion of the rise and fall of the working-class press in Britain, but make no attempt whatsoever to relate this discussion to the United States or examine why an explicitly working-class press never gained a mass following in America.²²

Nearly all of Chomsky's work on the media begins with a restatement of his propaganda model. There is never an attempt to investigate the subject in the spirit of inquiry to see if the facts fit the model. It's always the other way around: the facts are shoe-horned into the theory. Chomsky's analysis of the murder of Polish priest Jerzy Popieluszko in Communist Poland in 1984, and how this relates to political killings in Central America in the same era, provides a good example of his methods. It happens also to be the first case examined in *Manufacturing Consent* and—as is usual for the monomaniacal Chomsky—is referred to again and again in his speeches and other works.

According to Herman and Chomsky, the case definitively demonstrates how the media distort reality:

Popieluszko, murdered in an enemy state, will be [seen in the media as] a worthy victim, whereas priests murdered in our client states in Latin America will be unworthy. The former may be expected to elicit a propaganda outburst by the mass media; the latter will not generate sustained coverage.²³

The authors discuss the murder of Popieluszko, who had

supported the anti-Communist Solidarity trade union movement, and compare it with murders of pro-Communist clerics and their supporters in what they call the United States' "sphere of influence" in Latin America—El Salvador and Guatemala in particular. The two report, correctly, that Popieluszko's murder received more extensive and more sympathetic coverage than the murders of the pro-Communist Central American clerics and their supporters. According to them, this proves that "when differential treatment occurs on a large scale, the media, intellectuals, and public are able to remain unconscious of [the differential treatment itself] and maintain a high moral and self-righteous tone."²⁴ Rolling out their train of logical consequence, they assert that "This is evidence of an extremely effective propaganda system,"²⁵ and that, as a result of media inaction and government conspiracy, the death squads of Latin America had a "continued freedom to kill" granted to them by the United States.²⁶

But does the fact that the murder of a Polish priest received this attention really indicate that American media follow the government's bellicose anti-Communism in a servile way? Might it not have something to do with another of those inconvenient facts that Chomsky routinely ignores—in this case, that about 10 million people of Polish ancestry (roughly 3.5 percent of the population) live in the United States?²⁷ In the entire world, no city except Warsaw has more Polish residents than Chicago. The United States, in fact, has almost as many Polish residents as there are Guatemalans in Guatemala (population 12 million) and more than there are Salvadorans in El Salvador (population 6.5 million).²⁸ Thus, other things being equal, events in Poland will have far more relevance from a media point of view than events in El Salvador and Guatemala.

But of course there was also an ideological dimension. The dominant historical fact of the mid-1980s was the Cold War endgame, many of whose pivotal events and confrontations occurred in Europe generally and Poland in particular. Occupied by the Red Army, Poland had been the locus of the Cold War's origins, the first country to be made a Soviet satellite state. It was the largest country in Central Europe and, of the Soviet satellites,

had the biggest economy. Three years before Popieluszko's murder, the Red Army had been compelled to intervene militarily in order to quell Solidarity's insurrectionary activities. Popieluszko and Solidarity were threatening the rule of the Communist government that the Soviets had imposed on Poland, which is why the priest was killed.

Popieluszko's murder was pivotal in turning the tide of Polish and world opinion against the Soviet occupation, and within five years of his death, the movement he had helped to lead played a key role in redrawing the map of the world. In short, his death was big news.²⁹ By contrast, the murders of left-wing activists in Latin America took place in a region where violence dominates the political landscape and where such atrocities are all too common. Tragic as they may have been, they were not comparably historic events, and only an ideologically driven press—one intensely devoted to left-wing propaganda (which is what Chomsky really desires)—would treat them as major news.

As a footnote, one might add that the political thrust of the popular culture, something lying beneath Chomsky's horizon although it reaches masses of Americans, did its best to propagandize the leftist side of all these events. The only widely released film of the early 1980s dealing directly with Communist ideology was Warren Beatty's *Reds*, which presented the Communists in a heroic light. (When it won the Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Director in 1982, the Academy orchestra played "The Internationale," the anthem of the Communist world movement.) During the 1980s—the period of the civil wars in Central America—at least a dozen films and public television documentaries, including Oliver Stone's *Salvador* (1986), the pro-Sandinista/anti-American documentary *Dream of a Free Country* (1983) and the avidly pro-Communist drama *Last Plane Out* (1983), presented the conflict with Communism from Chomsky's viewpoint. There were no films presenting the other side.

In other words, the popular culture's "bread and circuses" for the masses actually promoted Chomsky's view of world affairs—replete with U.S. villainy, skullduggery and financing by the very oligarchs who he claims relentlessly pursue the interests of the capitalist ruling class.



In his media criticism, Noam Chomsky engages in illogical argument, selectively disregards evidence, and displays no skepticism of the “facts” he adduces to support his claims. The most salient aspect of his thought, however, is contempt for the views and opinions of the average person. Chomsky asserts that those who reject his teachings will

live under what amounts to a self-imposed totalitarianism, with the bewildered herd marginalized, directed elsewhere, terrified, screaming patriotic slogans, fearing for their lives, and admiring with awe the leader who saved them from destruction, while the educated masses goosestep on command and repeat the slogans they are supposed to repeat and the society deteriorates at home.³⁰

In other words, he believes that nearly all Americans—including the working class whose patron he fancies himself to be—are either too stupid to understand how the media manipulate every aspect of their lives, or complicit pawns who “goosestep” to every whim of the despotic rich. Democracy, a free press and, indeed, freedom itself are little more than illusions foisted on a public that’s gullible or evil, or both. The people can simultaneously act against their own interests and be pandered to continually because they are, in Chomsky’s view, loathsome.

Chomsky’s consuming hatred for his entire subject—both the media and its alleged victims—precludes him from suggesting alternatives and reforms. Despite his claims to be an anarchist or an oxymoronic “libertarian socialist,” Chomsky repeatedly reveals himself to be much closer to a vulgar Marxist committed to the cliché that underwrote the now-vanished Communist totalitarianism: the ruling ideas are everywhere the ideas of the ruling class. Everything else is false consciousness. But unlike the orthodox Marxist, who must have unwavering faith in the capability of the masses to throw off their shackles, Chomsky has too much contempt for the American people to hold out even a vague hope for revolution.

NOTES

I am grateful to David Horowitz and Edward Alexander for extremely helpful comments and criticism.

- ¹ Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988 [2001]), p. 17.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- ³ E.g. Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 1989), p. 6.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- ⁵ Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, p. xiv.
- ⁶ Noam Chomsky, *Media Control*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002).
- ⁷ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (1922; New York: The Free Press, 1997), p. 189.
- ⁸ David Barsamian and Noam Chomsky, *Propaganda in the Public Mind* (Boston: South End Press, 2001), p. 151.
- ⁹ B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Real War: 1914–1918* (New York: Little, Brown, 1963).
- ¹⁰ Bill Sweetman, “Mystery Contact May Be Aurora,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, February 28, 1992, p. 333.
- ¹¹ “Interview with Yuri Pavlov,” The National Security Archive of George Washington University, Internet resource at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-18/pavlov1.html (accessed July 12, 2003).
- ¹² *Manufacturing Consent*, p. 340. The two cite a Procter & Gamble “instructions to its ad agency,” but neglect to mention that Procter & Gamble owns outright the programs *Guiding Light* and *As the World Turns*. This is almost certainly why the company refers to “the depiction of business on *our* programs” (emphasis mine) in the statement Chomsky and Herman cite. Despite a few efforts to launch other shows on a similar model, this arrangement of entertainment program ownership by consumer products companies is unique to soap operas as of summer 2003 and it’s thus not surpris-

ing that Procter & Gamble would exercise a significant degree of control over the content of these particular programs. In any case, how this would effect news coverage is never described.

- ¹³ Robert S. Lichter, Linda Lichter and Stanley Rothman, *Video Villains: The TV Businessman, 1955–1986* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Media and Public Affairs, 1986).
- ¹⁴ See Internet resource at <http://www.hrc.org/worknet/> (accessed July 13, 2003).
- ¹⁵ See Internet resource at <http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/> (accessed August 10, 2003).
- ¹⁶ *Manufacturing Consent*, p. lii.
- ¹⁷ Gallup Organization, December 5–8, 2002, cited at <http://www.pollingreport.com/media.htm> (accessed August 10, 2003).
- ¹⁸ *Manufacturing Consent*, p. xvi.
- ¹⁹ Barsamian and Chomsky, *Propaganda in the Public Mind*, pp. 25–26.
- ²⁰ See e.g. *Manufacturing Consent*, p. xiv.
- ²¹ See e.g. Chomsky, *Media Control*, pp. 22–29.
- ²² See e.g. *Manufacturing Consent*, p. 15.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- ²⁷ Polish-American Congress, “Poles in the United States,” 2002, online at <http://www.polamcon.org/about%20us.htm>.
- ²⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, *CIA World Factbook, 2003*, online at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/> (accessed July 20, 2003). All population figures cited above come from this source.
- ²⁹ Polish Communists, of course, killed many thousands of dissidents during their initial takeover. By the mid-1980s, admittedly, dissidents were only rarely killed outright.
- ³⁰ Chomsky, *Media Control*, pp. 57–58.

PART II

CHOMSKY AND THE JEWS

FOUR

CHOMSKY'S WAR AGAINST ISRAEL

Paul Bogdanor

In Noam Chomsky's books, essays and public campaigns stretching back for decades, one theme is constant: his portrayal of the state of Israel as the focus of evil in the Middle East, a malevolent outlaw whose only redeeming feature is the readiness of its own left-wing intelligentsia to expose its uniquely horrifying depravity. A Jew whose parents were Hebrew teachers and who was himself a supporter of an extreme left-wing Zionist group in his youth, Chomsky has paraded an anti-Israel obsession since the mid-1970s. It began with the short polemic *Peace in the Middle East?*, in which he argued that the country should be replaced by a binational socialist regime; it escalated in the 1980s with his lengthier works *Fateful Triangle* and *Pirates and Emperors*, which portray Israel as a terrorist state with "points of similarity" to Nazi Germany; and it culminated in his most recent collection of diatribes, *Middle East Illusions*, in which he continues to present Israel as the main obstacle to peace in the region, even while Israeli civilians suffer horrible war crimes.¹ Dozens of other publications, lectures and interviews manifest further symptoms of Chomsky's fixation upon the Jewish state. As we shall see, his polemics on the Arab–Israeli conflict bear the hallmarks of his intellectual repertoire: massive falsification of facts, evidence, sources and statistics, conducted in the service of a bigoted and extremist ideological agenda.

Abolishing Israel

Central to Chomsky's position is the idea that Israel should cease to exist in its present form. This view is set out in his earliest writings on the subject, where he calls Israel "a state based on the principle of discrimination. There is no other way for a state with non-Jewish citizens to remain a Jewish state...."² Of course, Chomsky gives no reason why a Jewish state must necessarily deprive its non-Jewish citizens of the right to vote, form political parties or hold elective office; nor does he explain why it must deny them freedom of speech, freedom of religion or freedom of association. In fact, Israel grants all these to its non-Jewish citizens. By contrast, such rights have been totally absent in many states to which Chomsky has been attracted, such as Maoist China, which he considered "quite admirable," or Stalinist Vietnam, where he found "a miracle of reconciliation and restraint," or Pol Pot's Cambodia, which he compared favorably with revolutionary-era America, with liberated France, and—to return to our topic—with the Israeli kibbutz system.³

According to Chomsky, Israel's Jewishness "resides in discriminatory institutions and practices...expressed in the basic legal structure of the state," which defines Israel as the home of all Jews, wherever they live.⁴ But he does not object to democratic Armenia, which promotes "the protection of Armenian historical and cultural values located in other countries" and guarantees that "[i]ndividuals of Armenian origin shall acquire citizenship" through "a simplified procedure"; or democratic Lithuania, which announces that "[e]veryone who is ethnically Lithuanian has the right to settle in Lithuania"; or democratic Poland, which holds that "[a]nyone whose Polish origin has been confirmed in accordance with statute may settle permanently in Poland."⁵ Nor does he call for the abolition of, for example, democratic Ukraine, which "promotes the consolidation and development of the Ukrainian nation, of its historical consciousness, traditions and culture" and "provides for the satisfaction of national and cultural and linguistic needs of Ukrainians residing beyond the borders of the State."⁶ Clearly, Chomsky's abhorrence of the modern nation-state is less than universal.

Chomsky is particularly offended by the relation between Israel's Jewish and non-Jewish citizens. The Jewish state, he maintains, cannot be Jewish in the sense that France is French, for whereas a citizen of the Jewish state is not necessarily Jewish, a citizen of France is automatically French.⁷ The appropriate analogy, in his view, is "a White State with Black citizens" or "a Christian State with Jewish citizens."⁸ Once again, Chomsky's morality is highly selective. Does he oppose the existence of Britain, a Protestant state with non-Protestant citizens; or Ireland, a Catholic state with non-Catholic citizens; or Greece, a Greek Orthodox state with non-Orthodox citizens? By the standards he applies to Israel, the list of discriminatory states must be rather long, incorporating not only the countries just mentioned but also every Arab society. It does not, however, seem to include his preferred Communist tyrannies in Vietnam, which brutally expelled its Chinese population, drowning as many as 250,000 boat people; or in Cambodia, where ethnic minorities were savagely decimated by the Khmer Rouge.⁹

Chomsky has a ready corollary for his assertion that a Jewish state inevitably rests on "the principle of discrimination." It is this: "If a state is Jewish in certain respects, then in these respects it is not democratic." He considers this to be "obvious," although one suspects that he will have some difficulty in persuading millions of Israeli voters that they are actually living under a Jewish dictatorship.¹⁰ In Israel, he adds, the land "is reserved for the use of Jewish citizens" by "laws and regulations that effectively exclude Arab citizens" from nine-tenths of the territory, thanks to the machinations of the Jewish National Fund.¹¹ The "laws and regulations" are, of course, pure fantasy on Chomsky's part: Israeli state land—over four-fifths of the country—is available to Jews and Arabs alike. The Jewish National Fund, an independent charity, owns private real estate that is regulated by a government authority, and this ground is also leased to Arabs in practice.¹² Needless to say, Chomsky's falsehoods are disseminated in the belief that few readers will want to research the facts.

How would Chomsky replace the Jewish state that he is so anxious to abolish? His proposed alternative is "socialist bina-

tionalism.”¹³ But Chomsky’s ideal is far more objectionable than a Jewish state with non-Jewish citizens: his scheme calls for Jewish cantons with Arab inhabitants, and Arab cantons *with no Jewish inhabitants*. At one point he does stipulate that any individual “will be free to live where he wants.”¹⁴ But then he drops this principle in favor of the binational state he considers “the most desirable,” one in which “Palestinian Arabs who wish to return to their former homes within the Jewish-dominated region would have to abandon their hopes,” while “Jews who wish to settle in the Arab-dominated region would be unable to do so.”¹⁵ In effect, Arabs could not become a *majority* in Jewish areas, but Jews would be forbidden even to live as a *minority* in Arab areas. The founders of apartheid would surely applaud.

The details of Chomsky’s plans are even more disturbing. His binational socialist state would be “integrated into a broader federation” and modeled on the “successful social revolution” in Communist Yugoslavia, where 70,000–100,000 people were massacred.¹⁶ It would in fact be a “people’s democracy” of the familiar type, which would have to be “integrated” into the Arab world by force, given that “support for compromising Israeli independence is virtually non-existent in Israel.”¹⁷ The human costs of such a transformation can only be imagined. Perhaps this explains why Chomsky sponsored the leader of the Marxist-Leninist Matzpen party, who openly advocated terrorist atrocities against his fellow Israelis while promising that unless they were “split from Zionism,” they would suffer “another Holocaust,” because “the Arab revolution is going to win.”¹⁸

In Chomsky’s later writings, the absurdity of “socialist binationalism” became apparent even to him, and he altered his position. Demanding the creation of an independent Palestine, he now uses the term “rejectionism” in two senses: in one, it refers to Arab calls for the destruction of Israel; in the other, it includes Israeli policies that “deny the right of self-determination to Palestinian Arabs,” that is, the right of the PLO to establish an irredentist dictatorship in the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁹ Thus Chomsky equates the PLO’s goal of destroying an existing state, a free society including both Jewish and Arab citizens, with Israel’s reluctance to establish a new state, a nationalist dictator-

ship intended solely for Arabs. Such is the political morality he recommends to his readers in the name of “peace” and “justice.”

Arab “Moderation” in Fact and Fantasy

Chomsky’s deep loathing of Israel hovers in the background of his systematic falsification of the causes of the Arab–Israeli conflict. His dismissal of historical fact begins with his treatment of Israel’s early years.

When the United Nations voted for a two-state solution in 1947, the Jewish community under the British Mandate overwhelmingly accepted the plan, while the Arab world unanimously rejected it. Arab armies invaded the new state of Israel, and the secretary-general of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, declared “a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades.”²⁰ This was the first in a long series of genocidal outbursts that have since marked Arab policy toward Israel.

Chomsky does not mention the Egyptian military orders in 1956 calling for “the annihilation of Israel and her extermination in the shortest possible time, in the most brutal and cruel battles.”²¹ Nor does he mention the Saudi reaction to the capture of Adolf Eichmann, “who had the honor of killing five million Jews,”²² or the Jordanian announcement that by perpetrating the Holocaust, Eichmann had “conferred a real blessing on humanity,” and that the best response to his trial would be “the liquidation of the remaining six million” to avenge his memory.²³ Nor in all his musings about the Middle East does Chomsky mention the promise by Egyptian dictator Gamal Abdel Nasser, “We shall not enter Palestine with its soil covered in sand. We shall enter it with its soil saturated in blood.”²⁴ These expressions of the Arab world’s fascist hatred of Israel are consigned to oblivion in Chomsky’s account. Instead, he constantly insists that the facts are being “reconstructed to serve the desired illusions” of the omnipotent Zionist propaganda machine.²⁵

Discussing the 1967 war, in which Israel gained control over the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula, Chomsky concludes that “it is plainly impossible”

to say that Israel was the victim of aggression.²⁶ He omits the fact that the crisis began with Syrian bombardment of northern Israel, announcing an assault that would continue “until Israel has been eliminated.” As the situation escalated over the following months, Syrian defense minister Hafez al-Assad promised to “take the initiative in destroying the Zionist presence in the Arab homeland,” yet another forgotten call for genocide. After Egypt imposed its naval blockade of southern Israel, Nasser proclaimed: “We knew that closing the Gulf of Aqaba meant war with Israel. If war comes it will be total and the objective will be Israel’s destruction.” King Hussein of Jordan boasted that all of the Arab armies now surrounded Israel, while PLO founder Ahmed Shuqayri was certain that the time had come to “destroy Israel and its inhabitants.” Algerian prime minister Boumedienne pledged “the destruction of the Zionist entity,” and President ‘Aref of Iraq declared: “Our goal is clear—to wipe Israel off the face of the map.”²⁷ Yet none of this convinces Chomsky that Arab regimes were the aggressors.

This willful historical amnesia is matched by Chomsky’s apologetics for the PLO, a movement built on the premise that “armed struggle” is the only way to liberate Palestine, that the state of Israel is “entirely illegal, regardless of the passage of time,” and that “the liberation of Palestine will destroy the Zionist and imperialist presence.”²⁸ In Chomsky’s view, “the PLO has the same sort of legitimacy that the Zionist movement had in the pre-state period”²⁹—an insight that might be valid if the pre-state Zionist movement had been founded with the goal of destroying a country and murdering its population, or if it had been armed and financed by the surrounding dictatorships in order to facilitate this war of annihilation.

These absurdities culminate in Chomsky’s main argument: there is an “international consensus—which has long included the major Arab states, the population of the occupied territories, and the mainstream of the PLO—in support of a two-state political settlement,” and this understanding is flouted only by America and Israel.³⁰ The “consensus” view, in other words, holds that Israel must make “peace” on the aggressors’ terms, creating a hostile PLO dictatorship in the West Bank and Gaza while trig-

gering civil war by admitting millions of exiles under the PLO's "right of return," and allowing the military forces of the entire Arab world to come within striking distance of its major cities.³¹ It is not very surprising that Chomsky is so anxious to vindicate this position.

In fact, even these demands are purely tactical, as Chomsky is well aware but neglects to inform his readers. He pretends to believe in Nasser's public overtures, a sign that "[Arab] rejectionism began to erode" after 1967. But Nasser was planning "a far-reaching operation" against Israel; conscious of the need to "hide our preparations under political activity," he instructed his generals: "You don't need to pay any attention to anything I may say in public about a peaceful solution."³² Equally misleading is Chomsky's view of Anwar Sadat, who "moved at once" to implement "peace with Israel" in 1971.³³ Sadat's true position concerning "total Israeli withdrawal" was stated by his adviser Mohammed Heykal, editor of the official newspaper of the Egyptian regime: "If you could succeed in bringing it about, you would have passed sentence on the entire state of Israel."³⁴

Chomsky also suppresses the fact that in 1974, the PLO formulated its infamous "Phased Plan," seeking through "armed struggle" to create a "fighting national authority" in part of the country before achieving "a union of the confrontation states" with the aim of "completing the liberation" of the rest of Palestine by destroying Israel.³⁵ Instead, Chomsky assures his readers that the Arab regimes and the PLO made "an important effort to bring about a peaceful two-state settlement." As evidence of this effort, he adduces the draft UN Security Council resolution of January 1976, without explaining that the text of the resolution included an endorsement of the PLO's "right of return" for millions of Palestinian exiles, which entails the dissolution of Israel.³⁶

Chomsky's counterfactual history of peace proposals continues in this vein. After Israel surrendered the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in 1979, PLO leader Yasser Arafat declared that "when the Arabs set off their volcano there will be only Arabs in this part of the world," and pledged "to fuel the torch of the revolution with rivers of blood until the whole of the occupied

homeland is liberated, the whole of the homeland is liberated, not just a part of it.”³⁷ One year later, Arafat made the following announcement: “Peace for us means the destruction of Israel. We are preparing for an all-out war, a war which will last for generations.”³⁸ Shortly afterward, Arafat’s Fatah, supposedly the most moderate faction of the PLO, reiterated its founding commitment to “the complete liberation of Palestine” and “the liquidation of the Zionist entity economically, militarily, politically, culturally and intellectually.”³⁹

Surveying these events, Chomsky somehow finds it “quite clear” that the PLO “has been far more forthcoming than either Israel or the US with regard to an accommodationist settlement.”⁴⁰

While he offers every possible excuse for Arab extremism, Chomsky applies very different standards to Israel. In his version of reality, one of the “constant themes” of Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, was conquest of the whole region “including southern Lebanon, southern Syria, today’s Jordan, all of cis-Jordan [Palestine], and the Sinai,” thus establishing Zionist hegemony “from the Nile to Iraq.”⁴¹ He adds that a “plausible long-term goal” of Israeli policy might be “a return to something like the system of the Ottoman empire.” He also believes that Israeli missiles are designed to “put US planners on notice” that the pursuit of peace efforts “may lead to a violent reaction” intended to cause a confrontation between the superpowers, “with a high probability of global nuclear war.” All these possibilities are part and parcel of Israel’s “Samson complex,” the final degeneration of an “Israeli Sparta” which has become the world’s “fourth greatest military power,” menacing the Saudi oil fields and even the USSR, and creating the danger of “a final solution from which few will escape.”⁴² Thankfully, the sage of MIT is at hand to expose the Jewish state’s nefarious plans for the destruction of the human race.

Lebanon: Heroes and Criminals

Perhaps the best view of Chomsky’s ideas on the Middle East can be gleaned from his coverage of the war in Lebanon. Here again,

the heroes are the terrorists of the PLO, while the criminals are the leaders of Israel. Thus Chomsky assigns “unique credibility” to an Arab journalist who discovered “relative peace” in PLO-controlled areas of Lebanon; his source was writing in the midst of the Israeli invasion,⁴³ when PLO terrorists could no longer perpetrate acts of slaughter such as this:

An entire family had been killed, the Can'an family, four children all dead and the mother, the father, and the grandfather. The mother was still hugging one of the children. And she was pregnant. The eyes of the children were gone and their limbs were cut off. No legs and no arms.... We buried them in the cemetery, under the shells of the PLO. And while I was burying them, more corpses were found in the street.⁴⁴

Or this:

The PLO men killed Susan's father and her brother, and raped her mother, who suffered a hemorrhage and died. They raped Susan “many times.” They cut off her breasts and shot her. Hours later she was found alive, but with all four of her limbs so badly broken and torn with gunshot that they had to be surgically amputated. She now has only the upper part of one arm.

After Israel evicted the PLO from Beirut in 1982, “some Christian women conceived the idea of having Susan's picture on a Lebanese stamp, because, they said, her fate symbolizes what has happened to their country—‘rape and dismemberment by the PLO,’” but they were dissuaded.⁴⁵ We can also learn of a pregnant mother of eleven children who was murdered “just for the fun of it” along with her baby; small children mutilated and killed when terrorists threw a grenade at them; a man whose limbs were chained to four vehicles which were then driven in opposite directions, tearing him to pieces; a newspaper editor found with his fingers cut off joint by joint, his eyes gouged out and his limbs hacked off; a local religious leader whose family was forced to watch as his daughter was raped and murdered, with her breasts torn away; a dead girl with both hands severed and part of her head missing; men who were castrated during torture sessions; men and women chopped to pieces with axes; and various other manifestations of “relative peace” under the benevolent rule of the PLO.⁴⁶

Chomsky's delusions about the PLO were not shared by its victims. The American Lebanese League stated that the country had been "occupied by PLO terrorists" who "committed an orgy of atrocities and desecration against women and children, churches and gravesites.... From 1975 through 1981 the toll among civilians was 100,000 killed, 250,000 wounded, countless thousands made homeless," with 32,000 orphans and the capital city "held hostage by PLO criminals."⁴⁷ Many years later, the World Lebanese Organization, the World Maronite Union and multiple human rights groups concerned with the Middle East issued a public declaration accusing the PLO of genocide in Lebanon and addressing Yasser Arafat in the following terms: "You are responsible for the killing of 100,000 Lebanese civilians.... The United States government should have asked you to appear at The Hague for the crimes you perpetrated in Lebanon."⁴⁸ But while the victims search for ways to commemorate the "rape and dismemberment" of their country by the PLO, Chomsky ponders a slightly different question: whether "the PLO will be able to maintain the image of heroism with which it left Beirut."⁴⁹

The "heroism" of the PLO demands further examination. Chomsky finds it perfectly obvious that the PLO withdrew from Beirut for humanitarian purposes, "to save the city from total destruction" at the hands of the criminal Israelis—so obvious, indeed, that he regards anyone who disagrees as a disciple of Goebbels and Stalin.⁵⁰ But award-winning reporter David Shipler, like other informed observers, witnessed something quite different:

The huge sums of money the PLO received from Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries seem to have been spent primarily on weapons and ammunition, which were placed strategically in densely populated civilian areas in the hope that this would either deter Israeli attacks or exact a price from Israel in world opinion for killing civilians.... [C]rates of ammunition were stacked in underground shelters and anti-aircraft guns were emplaced in schoolyards, among apartment houses, next to churches and hospitals.⁵¹

Deploing Israel's conduct of the fighting in Lebanon,

Chomsky writes that in a comparable case, “few would have hesitated to recall the Nazi monsters.”⁵² By contrast, military historian Richard Gabriel observes that “concern for civilian casualties marked almost all IDF [Israel Defense Forces] operations throughout the war,” to the extent that it “reduced the speed with which the Israelis were able to overcome enemy opposition.”⁵³ After witnessing the combat firsthand, Trevor Dupuy and Paul Martell conclude: “As military historians we can think of no war in which greater military advantages were gained in combat in densely populated areas at such a small cost in civilian lives lost.... And this despite the PLO’s deliberate emplacement of weapons in civilian communities, and in and around hospitals....”⁵⁴

As against the heroism of the PLO, Chomsky believes that while Israel “cannot be compared to Nazi Germany,” there are nevertheless “points of similarity, to which those who draw the analogies want to draw attention.”⁵⁵ He freely writes of Israeli “concentration camps,”⁵⁶ and, for good measure, he recalls “the genocidal texts of the Bible.”⁵⁷ These references call to mind some relevant facts. As noted above, official Arab sources have applauded the Final Solution, just as they have pledged to enter Palestine drenched in Jewish blood. Egypt and Syria both harbored Nazi war criminals, the most notorious among them being Alois Brunner—wanted for the murder of 120,000 Jews—who received official protection in Damascus, where he announced that his victims “deserved to die because they were the Devil’s agents and human garbage.”⁵⁸ The PLO has sustained a long and fruitful alliance with neo-Nazi terrorists, fighting alongside the Freikorps Adolf Hitler in Jordan and forging other links in Lebanon; the comrades were united by “hatred of Jews and Israel,” according to a West German security expert, and by the fact that the PLO attributed “more striking power” to disciples of the Führer, as seen in the bombings of synagogues in Paris and Antwerp in 1981 and the attack on a Jewish restaurant in Paris in 1982.⁵⁹ For Chomsky, nevertheless, it is Israel that shares “points of similarity” with the Third Reich.

We may also consider Chomsky’s figures on the human cost of the war in Lebanon, yet another example of his chronic men-

dacity on issues involving Israel. Whereas the Lebanese police tabulated 19,085 dead, with a combatant/civilian ratio of 57 to 43 percent, Chomsky edits the sources to imply that nearly all the dead were civilians.⁶⁰ This example calls to mind Arthur Schlesinger's description of Chomsky as an "intellectual crook"—surely an apt label for a writer who now equates Israeli conduct in Lebanon with the barbarism of Pol Pot, having previously argued that the depredations of the Khmer Rouge "may actually have saved many lives."⁶¹

Discussing the Phalangist massacre of hundreds of people in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, Chomsky refers to "high-level planning and complicity" by the Israelis.⁶² The Kahan Commission, by contrast, found that Israeli commanders warned the Phalangists "not to harm the civilian population."⁶³ A New York libel trial judged as "false and defamatory" the claim that Ariel Sharon had intended the deaths of civilians.⁶⁴ Robert Hatem, security chief to the Phalangist commander Elie Hobeika, published a book maintaining that "Sharon had given strict orders to Hobeika...to guard against any desperate move," and that Hobeika had committed the massacre "to tarnish Israel's reputation worldwide" for the benefit of Syria.⁶⁵ Hobeika subsequently joined the Syrian occupation government and lived under Syrian protection, while further massacres in Sabra and Shatila occurred under the aegis of Syria in 1985, initiating the slaughter of 3,781 people by Syrian-backed Amal terrorists and their PLO opponents. This bloodbath evoked no reaction from Chomsky.⁶⁶

The World's Leading Terrorist Commanders

In recent years, Chomsky has surveyed the field of terrorism, where he discovers, yet again, that Israel is a paragon of criminality. Central to his argument is the deliberate misquotation of sources. Thus he explains that the "military doctrine of attacking defenseless civilians derives from David Ben-Gurion," who is supposed to have confided in his diary: "If we know the family—strike mercilessly, women and children included. Otherwise the reaction is inefficient. At the place of action there is no need to

distinguish between guilty and innocent.”⁶⁷ This is an interesting example of Chomsky’s technique: the purported quotation is not from Ben-Gurion, but from an adviser, Gad Machnes. And the latter’s actual comments were, in fact, the opposite of Chomsky’s version: “These matters necessitate the utmost precision—in terms of time, place, and whom and what to hit...only a direct blow and *no touching of innocent people!*”⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Ben-Gurion’s own views were clear and explicit: “There is no other way than by sharp, aggressive reprisal, *without harming women and children*, to prevent Jews from being murdered...”⁶⁹

Another example of Chomsky’s method can be found on the very same page. Here we are given a selective quotation of Labour Party diplomat Abba Eban, who wrote that as a result of Israel’s reprisal policy, “there was a rational prospect, ultimately fulfilled, that affected populations would exert pressure for the cessation of hostilities.” Chomsky reproduces the statement under the headline: “The Rational Basis for Attacking the Civilian Population.”⁷⁰ Readers are informed that Eban “does not contest” the allegations he is discussing, namely the picture “of an Israel wantonly inflicting every possible measure of death and anguish on civilian populations...” Eban, of course, does contest these allegations, as is readily apparent from his insistence, elsewhere in his article, that Israeli leaders “were no senseless hooligans when they ordered artillery response to *terrorist concentrations*.”⁷¹

In addition to mutilating quotations that his readers are unable to verify, Chomsky makes his case by inflating or misrepresenting each and every Israeli action involving civilian casualties. Reviewing the 1948 war, he tells us that Menachem Begin “took pride” in the infamous Irgun attack on Deir Yassin. In fact Begin, having ordered his followers to give advance warning to civilians and “to keep casualties to a minimum,” denied that a massacre had taken place.⁷² Elsewhere Chomsky refers to “the massacre of 250 civilians” at Lydda and Ramle, an allegation promoted by left-wing “revisionist historians” and long since discredited.⁷³ He also discusses “the massacre of hundreds of others at the undefended village of Doueimah,” citing a possible death toll of 1,000, although even Arab officials dismissed this

claim as “exaggerated” at the time, recording 27 killings, apparently carried out in revenge for atrocities against Jews.⁷⁴ But while distorting the facts of Jewish excesses, Chomsky has nothing to say about Arab violence and massacres, which killed 2,000 Jewish civilians, let alone the fate of nearly 600 Jewish captives who were “slaughtered amid scenes of gang rape and sodomy...dismembered, decapitated, mutilated and then photographed.”⁷⁵ These horrors are conveniently absent from his chronicles of “Middle East terrorism.”

Chomsky has other revelations in store, including a “recently-discovered Israeli intelligence report” which “concludes that of the 391,000 Arab refugees [in 1948]...at least 70 percent fled as a result of Jewish military operations.”⁷⁶ Turning to the scholarly literature, we learn that far from being an “intelligence report,” this document was an unclassified “review” by anonymous authors found in the private papers of Aharon Cohen, who was “convicted of treason in 1960 for illegal contacts with Soviet agents”—surely “the last place to look for official IDF documents,” as historian Shabtai Teveth observes.⁷⁷ No doubt the flight of Arab civilians during a war initiated by their own side with the intention of destroying the Jewish population was a major tragedy; equally tragic was the Arab ethnic cleansing of 800,000 Middle Eastern Jews once the hostilities were over, a crime that elicits no great concern in Chomsky’s writings.⁷⁸

Other examples of Israeli “terrorism” include “the expulsion by bombing” of “a million and a half civilians from the Suez Canal” during the War of Attrition in 1967–70. In academic studies, however, we find that Egypt launched a massive artillery attack on Israeli forces, which then “returned fire, targeting Egyptian artillery, the Suez refineries, and oil storage tanks,” whereupon “Nasser continued to evacuate the canal cities,” so that “by mid-September the town of Suez had only 60,000 of its original 260,000 citizens, and Ismailiya 5,000 of 173,000.”⁷⁹ In other words, Israel was not perpetrating “the expulsion by bombing” of vast numbers of civilians, but reacting to Egyptian attack; and it was not Israel but Egypt that removed the population from the war zone.

Another Chomsky tactic entails alluding to selected PLO

atrocities against Israeli civilians, which he sanitizes as far as possible, and then equating them with Israeli operations against terrorists, which he depicts as premeditated attacks on civilians. In May 1974, PLO terrorists attacked Ma'alot, murdering twenty-two children before perishing in the Israeli rescue attempt.⁸⁰ Chomsky's version of the massacre is that "members of a paramilitary youth group were killed in an exchange of fire."⁸¹ To this atrocity he counterposes the allegation that Israel was then engaged in "napalm bombing of Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon, with over 200 killed." His source is Edward Said, a former member of the PLO's ruling council. Not to be outdone, Chomsky reveals that Israel was involved in "large-scale scorched earth operations" with "probably thousands killed," although "no accurate figures are available"—perhaps because his source for this claim appears to be an article by a far-left journalist in a short-lived fringe publication that cites unverified estimates by anonymous "observers."⁸² These examples are matched by Chomsky's assertion that over two hundred people were killed by Israeli bombing of Sabra and Shatila in June 1982, based on an "eyewitness account" by an anti-Zionist propagandist in the PLO-sponsored *Journal of Palestine Studies*.⁸³

Many of Chomsky's judgments border on the surreal. In June 1976, PLO terrorists hijacked an Air France plane and diverted it to Idi Amin's Uganda, where the passengers were to be held hostage. A week later, Israeli commandos rescued the victims in the famous raid on Entebbe. Reacting to public admiration for this blow against international terrorism, Chomsky lamented "the outpouring of hatred and contempt for popular movements of the Third World." He felt that Israel's rescue mission should be compared to "other military exploits, no less dramatic, that did not arouse such awed admiration in the American press," notably the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. For Chomsky, the liberation of innocent hostages ranks with the fascist aggression that pulled the United States into the Second World War.⁸⁴

Extending his catalogue of Israeli "terrorism," Chomsky describes an Israeli bombing raid against Baalbek, Lebanon, in January 1984, "killing about 100 people, mostly civilians, with

400 wounded, including 150 children in a bombed-out schoolhouse.” He then ponders the likely reaction “if the PLO or Syria were to carry out a ‘surgical strike’ against ‘terrorist installations’ near Tel Aviv, killing 100 civilians and wounding 400 others, including 150 children in a bombed-out schoolhouse along with other civilian victims.”⁸⁵ But his own sources report that the target area was “the headquarters of the militant Shi’ite Moslem group known as Islamic Amal. About 350 Iranian Revolutionary Guards have been operating there as well, reportedly helping to train Lebanese and foreign volunteers in terrorist tactics, especially the use of bombs.” The Lebanese government (plainly a most impartial and reliable observer) claimed 100 dead in total—not 100 civilian dead, as Chomsky pretends—and 400 wounded, while a media correction the following day noted that “the figures were not independently confirmed” and that “the ‘civilian’ identification of the casualties was an assertion, not an agreed fact.”⁸⁶ The Shi’ite militias had recently killed 241 American peacekeepers and 58 French soldiers, along with 29 Israeli soldiers and 32 Arab prisoners, another fact that Chomsky chooses not to mention.

Chomsky also describes an incident in which “Israel hijacked a ferryboat operating between Cyprus and Lebanon,” but suppresses media reports that “the ferry was captured after intelligence information indicated several key Palestinian guerrillas were aboard” and that “there were indications the men were planning attacks on Israel.”⁸⁷ These facts might be of interest to those who think that countries have the right to intercept vessels believed to be carrying terrorists who are preparing to slaughter innocent civilians in their territory. Having lambasted the Israeli interception of suspected terrorists, who were promptly released unharmed when found to be innocent, Chomsky proceeds to compare the PLO massacre of schoolchildren at Ma’alot to Israeli bombardment of a Lebanese island near Tripoli, where casualties included “children at a Sunni boy scout camp” in his words, but actually members of al-Tawhid, an Islamic fundamentalist terror faction then allied to the PLO.⁸⁸

Chomsky adds that in April 1985, “several Palestinians were kidnapped from civilian boats operating between Lebanon and

Cyprus and sent to secret destinations in Israel," a discovery that stems from his careful reading of *News from Within*, a Marxist-Leninist publication in Jerusalem.⁸⁹ He complains that "Israel's hijacking of a Libyan civilian jet on February 4, 1986, was accepted with equanimity, criticized, if at all, as an error based on faulty intelligence"—not surprisingly, one might add, when we learn that the aircraft was an executive jet carrying official passengers after a major international terrorist conference attended by PLO commanders such as George Habash, Ahmed Jibril, Nayef Hawatmeh and Abu Musa, and that the interception was based on intelligence information that the haul might include Abu Nidal. As it happened, the wanted fugitives were not aboard, and Israel promptly released the travelers unharmed, permitting the Syrian Ba'ath party officials to return to Damascus after their visit to a rogue dictatorship during a gathering of international terrorist leaders.⁹⁰

By falsifying facts and manipulating sources in his trademark fashion, Chomsky is able to generate his desired conclusion: that the American president and the Israeli prime minister—Ronald Reagan and Shimon Peres, respectively—are "two of the world's leading terrorist commanders."⁹¹ The pretext for this claim is Israel's bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunis. If Chomsky's verdict is accepted, then this attack on a prime terrorist target is worse than the slaughter of 100,000 civilians during the years of PLO terror and destruction in Lebanon; worse than the massacre of up to 55,000 inhabitants of Hama by the neo-Nazi rulers of Syria; worse than the murder of 450,000 victims by the Ba'athist criminals in Iraq; worse than the execution of 30,000 opponents by the fundamentalist ayatollahs in Iran; worse than the genocide of two million people by theocratic fascists in Sudan.⁹² These examples of Chomsky's mendacity can easily be multiplied.

The Treachery of the PLO

We turn, finally, to Chomsky's version of the Israeli-Palestinian "peace process." The origin of the so-called Oslo Accords lies in the events of 1988, when the PLO supposedly renounced terror-

ism and recognized Israel. "There was no PLO recognition of Israel," announced deputy leader Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) at the time, while Yasser Arafat issued a joint statement with Colonel Qaddafi explaining that "the so-called 'State of Israel' was one of the consequences of World War II and should disappear, like the Berlin Wall."⁹³ Three years later, an Israeli government accepted the PLO's *bona fides* and agreed to permit the creation of a PLO dictatorship in the West Bank and Gaza.⁹⁴ "We plan to eliminate the State of Israel," declared Arafat not long afterward. "We will make life unbearable for Jews by psychological warfare and population explosion; Jews won't want to live among us Arabs."⁹⁵ Meanwhile terrorist atrocities escalated to unprecedented levels, and Israelis were subject to suicide massacres within their own borders for the first time in the history of their country.⁹⁶

Chomsky had his own explanation for the Oslo Accords. Having previously applauded the PLO for its "heroism," he made a shocking discovery: the PLO was crippled by "corruption, personal power plays, opportunism, and disregard for the interests and opinions of the people it claimed to represent.... With its popular support in decline and its status deteriorating in the Arab world, the PLO became more tolerable to US-Israeli policymakers."⁹⁷ In short, the PLO had sold out to the imperialist Americans and the colonialist Israelis. Worldwide support for the peace process merely indicated "the power of doctrinal management" and the fact that "the intellectual culture is obedient and unquestioning," as manifested by "the state of international opinion, now so submissive on this issue that commentators and analysts have literally forgotten the positions they and their governments advocated only a few years ago."⁹⁸ Apparently the entire human race, apart from Chomsky and a few brave disciples, was now in the grip of Zionist propaganda.

As the Oslo Accords progressed toward their inevitable climax of blood and chaos, Chomsky ranted about the American-Israeli plot to "construct a system of permanent neocolonial dependency" in the West Bank and Gaza.⁹⁹ He placed great stress on the Israeli settlements, knowing full well that the vast majority of the settlers live next to the pre-1967 borders and pose no obstacle to a major withdrawal.¹⁰⁰ He also portrayed Ehud

Barak's two-state proposal as a "rejectionist" plan entailing "cantoning" of the disputed territories, with the Palestinian Authority now "playing the role traditionally assigned to indigenous collaborators under the several varieties of imperial rule."¹⁰¹

The reality was quite different, as West Bank dignitary and PLO strategist Faisal Husseini acknowledged:

Barak agreed to a withdrawal from 95% of the occupied Palestinian lands.... [N]o other party will be able to conduct a dialogue with us except from the point where Barak stopped, namely, from the right to 95% of the territory.... [O]ur eyes will continue to aspire to the strategic goal, namely, to Palestine from the [Jordan] River to the [Mediterranean] Sea.¹⁰²

Elsewhere Husseini announced: "We are ambushing the Israelis and cheating them.... [O]ur ultimate goal is the liberation of all historic Palestine from the [Jordan] River to the [Mediterranean] Sea."¹⁰³ And the chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Ahmad Qurei (Abu Ala), explained: "It was the first intifada that brought about Oslo, and this is an important and great achievement because it did so *without us giving anything* [in return]."¹⁰⁴

The predictable culmination of the Oslo Accords was the second intifada, a horrifying campaign of massacres directed at innocent Israelis, including pregnant women and infants. Meanwhile, Chomsky deplores Israel's halting efforts at self-defense, even though serious studies conclude that "the mortality data show no sign of systematic targeting of Palestinian civilians by Israeli forces."¹⁰⁵ By contrast, he is completely indifferent to the existence of ninety Fatah training camps where some 25,000 children have received instruction in the arts of kidnapping and murder.¹⁰⁶ In its public broadcasts, the Palestinian Authority denounces Jews as "apes and pigs," offers "blessings for whoever has saved a bullet in order to stick it in a Jew's head," and calls on its followers to "annihilate the Jews and their supporters."¹⁰⁷ The Egyptian state media give "thanks to Hitler, of blessed memory" for his actions against "the most vile criminals on the face of the earth," namely the Jews, while conceding that "we do have a complaint" against the Führer in that "his revenge on them was not enough."¹⁰⁸ Saudi clerics affirm the religious duty to "destroy the tyrant Jews" because "the Jews are the helpers of Satan."¹⁰⁹

But Chomsky's readers will search in vain for any acknowledgment of these facts in his writings on the Middle East.

Chomsky's fanatical hatred of Israel is such that even simple consistency is too much for him. At the height of the suicide bombings, he signed a petition demanding that universities divest from Israel.¹¹⁰ Critics pointed out that Chomsky had not proposed comparable measures against any of the racist and fascist dictatorships in the region: the terrorist Palestinian Authority, the apartheid regimes in Egypt or Saudi Arabia, the neo-Nazi rulers of Syria or the genocidal criminals in Sudan. Having initiated his campaign, Chomsky was then quick to renounce it: "I've probably been the leading opponent for years of the campaign for divestment from Israel," he averred, in a display of doublethink that will be familiar to students of Orwell.¹¹¹

Conclusion

In light of this appalling record of apologetics for neo-Nazi fanaticism, we can only ask: What is Chomsky's motive for pretending that Arab regimes are falling over themselves to make peace, that the PLO is a bastion of moderation, that Israel is driving the Middle East, and perhaps the whole world, toward catastrophe and nuclear war? There are several possible answers. First, Israel is America's most important ally in one of the world's vital regions. In Chomsky's words: "There is an offshore US military base in the Middle East called Israel."¹¹² If America is the Great Satan, then Israel, by extension, must be the Little Satan. Second, the Jewish state has disappointed Chomsky's hopes that it would move toward "socialist binationalism" and solidarity along "class lines."¹¹³ Contrary to his advice, Israel has not supported revolutionary movements such as the FLN terrorists who massacred up to 150,000 people after Algerian independence.¹¹⁴

Another explanation suggests itself. In his first writings on the subject, Chomsky asserted that a key barrier to a "just peace" was "commitment to a Jewish state."¹¹⁵ Shortly afterward, he complained that his "peace" plan, entailing abolition of this Jewish state, had been thwarted by "the commitment of the Israeli

government to Jewish dominance throughout the region.”¹¹⁶ As we have seen, his major work on the conflict is littered with analogies between Israel and Nazi Germany, culminating in references to “Israeli concentration camps” and the “genocidal texts of the Bible,” along with dark warnings of a Zionist “final solution” that will eventuate in the total destruction of the human race. At the same time, he believes there are “no antisemitic implications in denial of the existence of gas chambers, or even denial of the holocaust,” or in the claim “that the holocaust (whether one believes it took place or not) is being exploited, viciously so, by apologists for Israeli repression and violence.”¹¹⁷

Nor can we forget the unadulterated bile that Chomsky has seen fit to pour upon his fellow American Jews. Explaining why his *Fateful Triangle* was virtually ignored in the American Jewish media, he charged that “[t]he Jewish community here is deeply totalitarian. They do not want democracy, they do not want freedom.”¹¹⁸ Elsewhere he felt compelled to mention New York, with its “huge Jewish population, Jewish-run media, a Jewish mayor, and domination of cultural and economic life.”¹¹⁹ After all, he insists, American Jews are now “a substantial part of the dominant privileged elite groups in every part of the society.... [T]hey’re very influential, particularly in the ideological system, lots of writers, editors, etc. and that has an effect.”¹²⁰ Horrified by this new injustice, America’s leading “dissident” will bravely endeavor to protect the suffering masses from their Jewish oppressors.

In sum, Chomsky’s writings on the Arab–Israeli conflict are a mass of distortions, misrepresentations and plain falsehoods, all of which serve to incriminate the victims and exonerate the aggressors in this ongoing tragedy. Every crime by Israel’s foes is portrayed as a regrettable but understandable lapse, a mere detour from the course of moderation that they pursue with such dedicated benevolence, in the midst of the infinite wickedness of the nation they are fighting to destroy. It is hardly surprising that for the advocate of such a worldview, fellow Jews are hated enemies, while Holocaust deniers are cherished allies.

NOTES

- ¹ Noam Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East?* (Fontana, 1975); *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians* (1983; rev. ed. Pluto Press, 1999); *Pirates and Emperors, Old and New: International Terrorism in the Real World* (1986; rev. ed. Pluto Press, 2002); *Middle East Illusions* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
- ² *Peace in the Middle East?* p. 37.
- ³ Alexander Klein, ed., *Dissent, Power and Confrontation* (McGraw-Hill, 1971), p. 118; Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (South End Press, 1979), pp. 20–21, 28; Chomsky and Herman, *After the Cataclysm* (South End Press, 1979), pp. 140, 149, 205.
- ⁴ Noam Chomsky and Bernard Avishai, “An Exchange on the Jewish State,” *New York Review of Books*, July 17, 1975.
- ⁵ Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, arts. 11, 14; Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, art. 32; Constitution of the Republic of Poland, art. 52.
- ⁶ Constitution of Ukraine, arts. 11, 12. See also Constitution of Albania, art. 8; Constitution of the Republic of Hungary, art. 6; Constitution of Romania, art. 7.
- ⁷ *Peace in the Middle East?* p. 110.
- ⁸ Chomsky and Avishai, “An Exchange on the Jewish State.”
- ⁹ On Communist ethnic cleansing in Vietnam, see e.g. Henry Kamm, *New York Times*, July 22, 1979; for the death toll among the boat people, see *San Diego Union*, July 20, 1986, citing UN estimates; on Cambodia’s minorities, see Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79* (Yale University Press, 1998).
- ¹⁰ *Peace in the Middle East?* p. 109.
- ¹¹ *Fateful Triangle*, pp. 483, 506; also *Peace in the Middle East?* p. 110.
- ¹² Alexander Safian, “Can Arabs Buy Land in Israel?” *Middle East Quarterly*, December 1997.
- ¹³ *Peace in the Middle East?* p. 43.

- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 39.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 114.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 69. For the death toll in Communist Yugoslavia, see *New York Times*, July 9, 1990.
- ¹⁷ *Peace in the Middle East?* p. 115.
- ¹⁸ See Carl Gershman, "Matzpen and Its Sponsors," *Commentary*, August 1970; Arie Bober and Noam Chomsky, Letters, *Commentary*, October 1970.
- ¹⁹ *Fateful Triangle*, pp. 39–40.
- ²⁰ BBC News Broadcast, May 15, 1948. On the mendacity of far-left "revisionist historians" who deny the facts, see Efraim Karsh, *Fabricating Israeli History: The "New Historians"* (Frank Cass, 1997); "Benny Morris and the Reign of Error," *Middle East Quarterly*, March 1999; and *Rethinking the Middle East* (Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 107–203.
- ²¹ Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel* (Valentine Mitchell, 1972), p. 38.
- ²² *Al-Bilad* (Saudi Arabia), May 31, 1960; quoted in Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1986), p. 162.
- ²³ Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel*, pp. 278–79.
- ²⁴ Ibid., p. 38.
- ²⁵ *Fateful Triangle*, p. 32.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p. 101.
- ²⁷ Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 42, 78, 93, 132, 136–37, 163–64.
- ²⁸ Palestine National Charter, 1968, Articles 9, 19, 22. For a detailed study by a noted Israeli dove, see Yehoshafat Harkabi, *The Palestinian Covenant and Its Meaning* (Valentine Mitchell, 1979).
- ²⁹ *Fateful Triangle*, p. 164.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 3. Chomsky repeatedly cites the assessments of Israeli "doves" as proof of Arab moderation, just as Nazi apologists might have illustrated the Führer's peaceful intentions by invoking the delusions of British appeasers during the 1930s.
- ³¹ See Col. Irving Kett, "Israel's Territorial Imperatives," *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, May 5, 1990, citing the views of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and over 100 U.S. generals; Michael Widlanski, ed., *Can Israel Survive a Palestinian State?* (Jerusalem: Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, 1990).
- ³² *Fateful Triangle*, p. 64; Oren, *Six Days of War*, pp. 319, 326.
- ³³ *Fateful Triangle*, p. 64.
- ³⁴ Interview, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1971), p. 7. See Gil Carl AlRoy, "Do the Arabs Want Peace?" *Commentary*, February 1974.

- ³⁵ Resolution of the 12th Session of the Palestine National Council, Cairo, June 8, 1974.
- ³⁶ *Fateful Triangle*, p. 67; UN Security Council Draft Resolution S/11940, January 26, 1976. Similar considerations apply to the 1982 Fez Plan (based on the 1981 Fahd Plan), which calls for “peaceful coexistence,” according to Chomsky; *ibid.*, p. 44. This plan also includes a thinly veiled endorsement of the “right of return.”
- ³⁷ Associated Press, March 12, 1979.
- ³⁸ *El Mundo* (Venezuela), February 11, 1980; quoted in John Laffin, *The PLO Connections* (Corgi Books, 1982), pp. 43–44.
- ³⁹ Associated Press, June 5, 1980.
- ⁴⁰ *Fateful Triangle*, p. 41.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 161; *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 58. Ben-Gurion’s views were the precise opposite: “There is no reason for including the Sinai Peninsula, Lebanon, or regions of Syria and Saudi Arabia.” Moreover, “The State of Israel is not identical with Eretz Israel [Hebrew: The Land of Israel].” Zaki Shalom, *David Ben-Gurion, the State of Israel and the Arab World, 1949–1956* (Sussex Academic Press, 2002), p. 150.
- ⁴² *Fateful Triangle*, pp. 455, 467–69.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 186–87, also citing two left-wing Israeli journalists who made the same points, again writing in the midst of the Israeli invasion, not during the peak years of PLO barbarism and massacre. Worse still, his footnote, p. 316n10, cites a report by David K. Shipler, *New York Times*, July 25, 1982, as if it supported his claims; in fact Shipler’s article is devoted to accounts of PLO tyranny.
- ⁴⁴ Jillian Becker, *The PLO: The Rise and Fall of the Palestine Liberation Organization* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1984), p. 123, quoting the town priest.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 153, 159, 268n13; Raphael Israeli, ed., *PLO in Lebanon: Selected Documents* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1983), pp. 240, 244–46, 234–53 *passim*.
- ⁴⁷ American Lebanese League, “The PLO Must Quit Lebanon!” *New York Times*, July 14, 1982, advertisement.
- ⁴⁸ World Lebanese Organization *et al.*, “Who Is the Oppressor in the Middle East?” *Washington Times*, October 7, 1996, advertisement.
- ⁴⁹ *Fateful Triangle*, p. 314.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 309.
- ⁵¹ *New York Times*, July 25, 1982. For protests by Lebanese civilians against PLO tactics, including a demand that the PLO be investigated for crimes against humanity, see Becker, *The PLO*, pp. 153, 280n10.
- ⁵² *Fateful Triangle*, p. 217, referring to a hypothetical Syrian conquest

of northern Israel. On the “destruction” caused by Israeli tactics, he cites a report by David Shipler, who in fact stresses that the PLO had caused the carnage by placing military targets beside churches, mosques, schools and other civilian locations; *New York Times*, July 3, 1982.

- ⁵³ Richard A. Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee* (Hill & Wang, 1984), pp. 86–87.
- ⁵⁴ Trevor N. Dupuy and Paul Martell, *Flawed Victory: The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the 1982 War in Lebanon* (Hero Books, 1986), p. 173.
- ⁵⁵ *Fateful Triangle*, p. 313n.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 217, 240, 307, 333, 335, 390, 398, 404, 415.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 444.
- ⁵⁸ *New York Times*, November 7, 1987.
- ⁵⁹ Yonah Alexander and Joshua Sinai, *Terrorism: The PLO Connection* (Taylor & Francis, 1989), pp. 187–88.
- ⁶⁰ *Fateful Triangle*, p. 221. The Lebanese figures comprise 12,310 killed outside Beirut, with a combatant/civilian ratio of 80% to 20%, and 6,775 dead inside Beirut, with a ratio of 16% to 84%; Associated Press, December 1, 1982; *Christian Science Monitor*, December 21, 1982.
- ⁶¹ *Fateful Triangle*, p. 229; Schlesinger, Letters, *Commentary*, December 1969; Chomsky and Herman, *After the Cataclysm*, p. 160.
- ⁶² *Fateful Triangle*, p. 405.
- ⁶³ “Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Events at the Refugee Camps in Beirut (The Kahan Commission),” February 8, 1983, published in the *Jerusalem Post*, February 9, 1983.
- ⁶⁴ *New York Times*, January 25, 1985.
- ⁶⁵ See the report by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, “Elie Hobeika’s Assassination: Covering Up the Secrets of Sabra and Shatila,” *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 1, no. 17 (January 30, 2002).
- ⁶⁶ *New York Times*, March 10, 1992, citing figures from the Lebanese police, who added that another 144,000 died in the civil war, 1975–90, with 13,968 abducted by Christian and Muslim militias, most presumed dead, in addition to 6,630 killed in “conflicts involving Palestinians” and 857 killed in the Sabra and Shatila massacre.
- ⁶⁷ *Fateful Triangle*, p. 182; also *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 73.
- ⁶⁸ “Partikol Meha-yeshiva Be-inyanei Shem,” January 1–2, 1948, Hakhibbutz Ha-meuhad Archive, Ramat-Efal, Israel, Galili Section, Box 45, File 1-4, pp. 3–4; reproduced in Efraim Karsh, “Benny Morris and the Reign of Error,” *Middle East Quarterly*, March 1999. Emphasis added.
- ⁶⁹ Protocol of Mapai Central Committee Meeting, September 16, 1954, David Ben-Gurion Archive, Sde Boker, Israel; reproduced in David Tal, “Israel’s Road to the 1956 War,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1 (February 1996), p. 67. Emphasis added.

- ⁷⁰ *Fateful Triangle*, p. 182; also *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 73, which further twists Eban's statement by misconstruing it as a reference to the "savage attack" on Lebanon.
- ⁷¹ Abba Eban, "Morality and Warfare," *Jerusalem Post*, August 16, 1981. Emphasis added.
- ⁷² *Fateful Triangle*, pp. 95–96; Michael S. Arnold, *Jerusalem Post*, April 3, 1998. Chomsky writes of 250 dead, but by 1987, historians at Bir Zeit University had reduced the figure to 120, i.e. 13 fighters and 107 civilians; Danny Rubinstein, *Ha'aretz*, January 28, 1998.
- ⁷³ *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 78; Alon Kadish, Avraham Sela and Arnon Golan, *Kibush Lod, 1948 (The Conquest of Lydda, 1948)* (Tel Aviv, 2000). The figure of 250 dead was the number of Arab casualties reported by the local Israeli commander after the suppression of an armed rebellion. Arab rumors initially claimed that 3,000 had been massacred. Israel's far-left "new historians" have produced some noteworthy atrocity fabrications; see Meyrav Wurmser, "Made-Up Massacre," *Weekly Standard*, September 10, 2001, discussing the Tantura hoax.
- ⁷⁴ *Pirates and Emperors*, pp. 30, 78; Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide* (South End Press, 1985), p. 76; on the casualties, see Yoav Gelber, *Palestine 1948* (Sussex Academic Press, 2001), p. 209, noting that 80 died in the conquest of the village; on the revenge, see Associated Press, August 24, 1984.
- ⁷⁵ On the Jewish civilians, see Netanel Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword: Israel's War of Independence, 1947–1949* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1961), p. 450; on the captives, Sarah Honig, *Jerusalem Post*, March 1, 2001.
- ⁷⁶ *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 198n105.
- ⁷⁷ Shabtai Tevet, "The Palestine Arab Refugee Problem and Its Origins," *Middle East Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2 (April 1990), pp. 214–49; quotations are at pp. 216–17.
- ⁷⁸ Ya'acov Meron, "Why Jews Fled the Arab Countries," *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1995; Moshe Gat, *The Jewish Exodus from Iraq, 1948–1951* (Frank Cass, 1997); Malka Hillel Shulewitz, ed., *The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands* (Continuum, 2001); Itamar Levin and Rachel Neiman, *Locked Doors: The Seizure of Jewish Property in Arab Countries* (Praeger, 2001).
- ⁷⁹ *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 73; Jonathan Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953 to 1970* (Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 137–38.
- ⁸⁰ Becker, *The PLO*, pp. 186–87.
- ⁸¹ *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 65.
- ⁸² *Fateful Triangle*, p. 189; *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 65; Chomsky's source for the claim of "thousands killed" seems to be the article by far-left writer Judith Coburn quoted in *Fateful Triangle*, pp. 190–91.
- ⁸³ *Fateful Triangle*, pp. 197, 318n42.

- ⁸⁴ *Seven Days*, July 1976; reprinted in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1976).
- ⁸⁵ *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 76.
- ⁸⁶ *New York Times*, January 5 & 6, 1984. See also *Boston Globe*, January 5, 1984.
- ⁸⁷ *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 64; *Boston Globe*, July 3, 1984.
- ⁸⁸ *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 65, citing *New York Times*, June 30, 1984, which naively repeats official Lebanese claims that the casualties were “boy scouts” and seems unaware that al-Tawhid was allied to the PLO, thus giving the erroneous impression that the Israeli and the Lebanese versions were in conflict.
- ⁸⁹ *Pirates and Emperors*, pp. 64, 194n71.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64; *New York Times*, February 5, 1986; *Los Angeles Times*, February 5, 1986.
- ⁹¹ *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 38.
- ⁹² On Syria, see “The Massacres of Hama: Law Enforcement Requires Accountability,” Syrian Human Rights Committee, London, 2002, reporting 30,000–40,000 massacred and 10,000–15,000 disappeared. On Iraq, Gerard Alexander, “A Lifesaving War,” *Weekly Standard*, March 29, 2004. On Iran, Christina Lamb, “Khomeini Fatwa ‘Led to Killing of 30,000 in Iran,’” *Sunday Telegraph* (UK), February 4, 2001. On Sudan, “Quantifying Genocide in Southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains, 1983–1998,” U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1998.
- ⁹³ Khalaf, *Al-Watan* (Kuwait), February 11, 1989; Arafat, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, January 8, 1990. See Jeane Kirkpatrick, “How the PLO Was Legitimized,” *Commentary*, July 1989.
- ⁹⁴ On the Palestinian Authority’s democratic credentials, see Daniel Polisar, “The Myth of Arafat’s Legitimacy,” *Azure*, Summer 2002.
- ⁹⁵ *Jerusalem Post*, February 23, 1996. See Yedidya Atlas, “Arafat’s Secret Agenda Is to Wear Israelis Out,” *Insight on the News*, April 1, 1996, citing multiple Israeli and Scandinavian reports. Ehud Ya’ari, “Bend or Break!” *Jerusalem Report*, April 4, 1996, confirmed the authenticity of the speech. See also Efraim Karsh, *Arafat’s War: The Man and His Struggle for Israeli Conquest* (Grove Press, 2003).
- ⁹⁶ For documentation of the Palestinian Authority’s alliance with Hamas, see Morton A. Klein, “The PLO and Hamas: Enemies or Allies?” *Middle East Quarterly*, June 1996. In the words of Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the PLO’s political department, “We were never different from Hamas. Hamas is a national movement. Strategically, there is no difference between us.” *Kul Al-Arab* (Israel), January 3, 2003; *Jerusalem Post*, January 4, 2003.
- ⁹⁷ Noam Chomsky, “The Israel-Arafat Agreement,” *Z Magazine*, October 1993.

- ⁹⁸ Noam Chomsky, "A Painful Peace," *Z Magazine*, January 1996.
- ⁹⁹ *Pirates and Emperors*, p. 180.
- ¹⁰⁰ According to a peace map published in 1994 by Yossi Alpher, former director of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, Israel could abandon 89 percent of the West Bank while retaining sovereignty over 70 percent of the settlers; *Jerusalem Post*, July 27, 1998.
- ¹⁰¹ Noam Chomsky, *Middle East Illusions* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), pp. 195, 217.
- ¹⁰² *Al-Safir* (Lebanon), March 21, 2001. For analysis of the negotiations, see Saul Singer, "Camp David, Real and Invented," *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2002, debunking the claims of Arafat apologists Robert Malley and Hussein Agha.
- ¹⁰³ *Al-Arabi* (Egypt), June 24, 2001.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Al-Nahar* (Lebanon), June 12, 2003. Emphasis added.
- ¹⁰⁵ Alexander A. Weinreb and Avi Weinreb, "Has Israel Used Indiscriminate Force?" *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2002. See also David B. Rivkin Jr., Lee A. Casey and Darin R. Bartram, *A Legal Analysis of the Attacks on Civilians and Infliction of "Collateral Damage" in the Middle East Conflict* (Washington: Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies, 2002).
- ¹⁰⁶ *New York Times*, August 3, 2000; *The Times* (London), October 25, 2000. See Justus Reid Weiner, "The Use of Palestinian Children in the Al-Aqsa Intifada," *Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints*, no. 441 (November 1, 2000), Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Israel.
- ¹⁰⁷ Palestinian Authority Television, August 3, 2001; April 12, 2002.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Al-Akhbar* (Egypt), April 18, 2001; the statement was repeated on April 25, 2001. One year later, the same source denounced Jews as "the plague of the generation and the bacterium of all time." On this occasion, the author denied that the Holocaust had occurred, but in light of this "imaginary tale," he saw fit to "complain to Hitler, even saying to him from the bottom of my heart, 'If only you had done it, brother, if only it had really happened, so that the world could sigh in relief [without] their evil and sin.'" *Al-Akhbar*, April 29, 2002.
- ¹⁰⁹ Kenneth R. Timmerman, *Preachers of Hate: Islam and the War on America* (Crown Forum, 2003), p. 147; "Friday Sermons in Saudi Mosques: Review and Analysis," Middle East Media Research Institute, September 26, 2002.
- ¹¹⁰ George Bradt, "Hundreds Support Call for Divestment," *Harvard Crimson*, May 8, 2002; Alan Dershowitz, "Noam Chomsky's Immoral Petition," *Jerusalem Post*, May 15, 2002.
- ¹¹¹ David Weinfeld, "Chomsky's Gift," *Harvard Crimson*, December 12, 2002.
- ¹¹² Taimur Khan, "Controversial Linguist Rails at U.S. Policies," *Daily Pennsylvanian*, October 4, 2002.

- ¹¹³ *Peace in the Middle East?* pp. 43, 66–67.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73. On the FLN massacres, see Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962* (Viking Press, 1977), p. 538.
- ¹¹⁵ *Peace in the Middle East?* p. 33.
- ¹¹⁶ “An Exchange on the Jewish State,” *New York Review of Books*, July 17, 1975.
- ¹¹⁷ W. D. Rubinstein, “Chomsky and the Neo-Nazis,” *Quadrant*, October 1981.
- ¹¹⁸ Interview, *Shmate: A Journal of Progressive Jewish Thought*, Summer 1988.
- ¹¹⁹ *Lies of Our Times*, January 1, 1990.
- ¹²⁰ Interview, “Israel, the Holocaust and Anti-Semitism,” *Alternative Radio*, October 24, 1986; for a transcript, see Noam Chomsky, *Chronicles of Dissent: Interviews with David Barsamian* (Common Courage Press, 1992), pp. 89–103.

FIVE

CHOMSKY AND HOLOCAUST DENIAL

Werner Cohn

In March 1989, A. M. Rosenthal of the *New York Times* wrote a column to mark the tenth anniversary of the Israeli–Egyptian peace treaty. The piece was generally favorable to Israel, although Rosenthal chided Israel for what he called its “historical error—the refusal to recognize the reality of the Palestinian people and passion.” One of his points was that Jordan is a Palestinian state (Jordan’s territory is situated in the original British Mandate of Palestine), and he opposed the creation of a second Palestinian state in that territory. This was enough to provoke Noam Chomsky: “We might ask how the Times would react to an Arab claim that the Jews do not merit a ‘second homeland’ because they already have New York, with a huge Jewish population, Jewish-run media, a Jewish mayor, and domination of cultural and economic life.”¹

As it happened, Rosenthal did not use either the words or the concept of a “second homeland.” Nonetheless, Chomsky put these words between quotation marks, implicitly attributing them to Rosenthal. (As we shall see, one of Chomsky’s chief rhetorical techniques is to misrepresent the writings of others.) But let that pass for the moment. What is actually most noteworthy in this passage is Chomsky’s sneering tone about the Jews of New York and the fact that his malice does not conform to familiar left-wing “anti-Zionist” attitudes. His target here is very

simply Jews, with no pretense whatever about being “anti-Zionist-but-not-anti-Semitic.”

When Chomsky wrote these words, there was indeed a Jewish mayor (Ed Koch) in New York, and a large Jewish population. There were Jews in the media on all levels. There were also many Jews in cultural and economic pursuits in New York. These facts are not in dispute.

But what are “Jewish-run media?” What is meant by a Jewish “domination of cultural and economic life?” These expressions are staples of traditional anti-Semitism. They suggest that Jews do not act as individuals but only as agents of a larger Jewish cabal. The anti-Semitic propagandist says that Jewish artists and businessmen and journalists do not pursue their professions as other people would. No, to him such Jewish men and women are “running” the media, “dominating” culture and the economy, all in their capacity as Jews, all for the sake of a sinister Jewish design.

But wait a minute: Is it Chomsky himself who makes these anti-Semitic allegations? Or some unnamed anti-Semitic Arab whose thoughts he is presenting for the sake of the argument? Chomsky does not say. But what he fails to do explicitly he does indirectly. By mixing legitimate facts (an elected mayor) with allegations of “running” media and “dominating” culture, all in the same sentence and in the same tone, he endorses and justifies the anti-Semitic assertions without taking direct responsibility for them.

We have here a fine example of the devious ambiguity that is also a key part of Chomsky’s argumentation. He says the anti-Semitic thing for his neo-Nazi following, which is the subject of this essay. But there is also an offering to his left-wing following: It is not I who would ever say such a thing, of course, but how can I help it if an oppressed Arab makes such interesting observations?



Hidden from tourists and from most of its citizens, the fringes of Israeli society harbor a fair number of babblers, seers, zealots

and other assorted know-it-alls. Such people are of interest mainly to journalists and social scientists who make a living describing the quaint and the curious. Ordinary Israelis merely shrug a shoulder: surely Jews, like everyone else, are entitled to a quota of maniacs.

But even in Israel, tolerant as it is of the eccentric and the deranged, the case of Israel Shahak gives one pause. Without a question, he is the world's most conspicuous Jewish anti-Semite. Like the Nazis before him, Shahak specializes in defaming the Talmud; in fact, he has made it his life's work to popularize the anti-Talmud ruminations of the eighteenth-century German anti-Semite Johann Eisenmenger.² Now a retired chemist, Shahak travels the world to propound a simple thesis: Jews are evil. The Talmud teaches them to be criminal, and Zionism compounds the evil.

Shahak's most recent tract, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion* (1994), demands that Jews repent of their own sins and those of their forefathers. First of all, he says, Jews should retroactively applaud the "popular anti-Jewish manifestations of the past"—for instance the Chmielnicki massacres of seventeenth-century Ukraine—as "progressive" uprisings.³

On its own, the hopelessly crackpot *Jewish History, Jewish Religion* would hardly find enough buyers to pay for its printing. But this little booklet is not on its own. It has a foreword by a famous writer, Gore Vidal, who tells us that, of course, he is not himself an anti-Semite. And its cover carries an enthusiastic endorsement by Noam Chomsky: "Shahak is an outstanding scholar, with remarkable insight and depth of knowledge. His work is informed and penetrating, a contribution of great value."⁴

Chomsky and the Neo-Nazis

Everyone knows Noam Chomsky for his linguistics and his left-wing politics. But the fact that he also plays an important role in the neo-Nazi movement of our time—that he is, in fact, the most important patron of that movement—is well known only in France. Much like a bigamist who must constantly strain to keep

one of his wives secret from the other, Chomsky and his most determined supporters try to prevent his liberal and left-wing followers from knowing too much about his other life, the neo-Nazi one.

Chomsky has said that his contact with the neo-Nazis is strictly limited to defending their freedom of speech. He has said that he disagrees with the most important neo-Nazi article of faith—that the Holocaust never happened. But such denials have not prevented him from engaging in prolonged and varied political collaborations with the neo-Nazi movement, nor from agreeing with it on other key points, nor—and this has proven essential for the neo-Nazis, especially in France—from using his scholarly reputation to promote and publicize their cause.

The name Robert Faurisson represents the most obvious (but not necessarily the most significant) connection between Chomsky and the neo-Nazis. Faurisson is a French hate-filled crank, a onetime lecturer in literature at the University of Lyon, ultra-right-wing and deeply anti-Semitic.⁵ As we shall see presently (although he heatedly denies it), Chomsky seems to have taken personally to this gentleman and has, in any case, seen fit to keep political company with him.

Faurisson says he is proud that his writings are distributed by partisans of both the Left (*La Vieille Taupe*) and the Right (*Ogmios*). The fact is that, on both sides, these are tiny sectarian groups. *Ogmios* is a Parisian bookstore-*cum*-movement that belongs to the anti-Semitic, anti-foreign, extreme right wing of the French political spectrum. It is reported to have received financial aid from the government of Iran.⁶ Far more important to Faurisson is *La Vieille Taupe* (“The Old Mole”) under the leadership of Pierre Guillaume, a small group of self-styled leftists who publish Faurisson’s booklets and pamphlets, advertise them and propagandize for them.* It is they who are the friends of Chomsky, and it is through them that he was recruited to his present position as grand patron of the neo-Nazi movement. (At

*“The Old Mole” is an allusion to Marx, who borrowed the image from Shakespeare in order to rejoice in what he thought was an underground presence of the revolution.

one point, Ogmios and La Vieille Taupe joined forces to publish a new anti-Semitic review, *Annales d'histoire révisionniste*.)

Since the 1960s, Faurisson says, he has devoted innumerable hours to what he considers a very deep study of the fate of the Jews during the Second World War. He has written some books and articles on the subject and summarizes his “findings” as follows:

The alleged Hitlerite gas chambers and the alleged genocide of the Jews form one and the same historical lie, which opened the way to a gigantic political-financial swindle, the principal beneficiaries of which are the State of Israel and international Zionism, and the principal victims of which are the German people—but not its leaders—and the entire Palestinian people.⁷

Faurisson and his associates on both sides of the Atlantic are pleased to call this Holocaust-denial “revisionism.” They urge, and I cannot disagree, that fair-minded persons in free countries must keep open minds when confronted with reasonable or at least reasoned challenges to conventional wisdom. Perhaps (who knows?) Napoleon never existed, perhaps the earth is flat, perhaps the Jews persecuted Hitler rather than vice versa, perhaps there was no such thing as a Holocaust of European Jews. In theory, all received truth can and must be constantly re-examined in the light of new evidence, and we should be thankful to scholars and other reasonable people when they can confront us with thoughtful skepticism. But when, on the other hand, an outrageous point is advanced without regard for its truthfulness or for any rule of logic or evidence, when it is made simply to injure and defame, in that case, surely, we are justified in being less than respectful to the would-be “revisionist.”

In my preparations for this essay on Noam Chomsky, I read what Faurisson has to say and even corresponded with him. I can report that his challenge to our knowledge of the Holocaust does not meet any criteria of moral or intellectual honesty, of seriousness of purpose, of intellectual workmanship; all that is apparent is hatred of Jews and an effort to hoodwink his audience. No wonder he has not found a single scholar to take him seriously. Obviously I do not intend to argue against his thesis myself any more than I would argue with a man who says he has

been eaten by a wolf. But it is necessary to give an indication of the intellectual level of Faurisson's propaganda so that the reader can get some inkling of why he is ostracized by all decent men, and to give a sense, too, of exactly what Noam Chomsky has endorsed.

The heart of Faurisson's argument is based on his assertions that Jewish witnesses to the Holocaust are simply liars, and that they are liars because they are Jews. Professor Rudolf Vrba, a colleague of mine at the University of British Columbia, was a witness to the exterminations at Auschwitz and is one of the very few prisoners there to have survived. Faurisson names him a liar and a Jew, and asserts that all who have had anything to do with bringing the Auschwitz facts to light—witnesses, investigators, magistrates and such—are either Jews or, in one case, “probably a Jew.”⁸ The Jewishness of a witness or a writer is always enough to destroy his credibility in Faurisson's eyes. (He does make exception for Chomsky and the two or three other Jews who have rallied to him in paroxysms of self-hatred.)

Faurisson is a practitioner of what might be called the Method of the Crucial Source, a favorite among cranks. This method consists of seizing upon a phrase or a sentence or sometimes a longer passage from no matter where, without regard to its provenance or reliability, to “prove” a whole novel theory of history or the universe. More often than not, the “source” in question is a newspaper item; after all, what cannot be found in some newspaper, somewhere, at some time? Among the many little booklets and leaflets that Faurisson and his left-wing publishers distribute by mail and in person, pride of place must go to a very pretentious pamphlet of twenty-four pages containing the French translation of an interview—really a long text by Faurisson interspersed with a few helpful questions by the interviewer—originally published in an Italian magazine in 1979.⁹ This short pamphlet has sixty-one footnotes in very small print, as well as a lengthy footnote to a footnote. Clearly it represents a major effort at presenting the gist of what Faurisson considers his proof that the Holocaust never happened.

One of Faurisson's basic claims is that Hitler's actions against the Jews were of the same order as Jewish actions

against Hitler, the one provoking the other as it were.¹⁰ To prove that there had been a Jewish “war” against Hitler as early as March 1933, Faurisson devotes his one and only pictorial illustration in this pamphlet to a reproduction of the front page of the *Daily Express* of London, dated March 24, 1933, which indeed bore the main headline: “Judea Declares War on Germany.” Subheads read: “Jews of All the World Unite—Boycott of German Goods.”

Faurisson claims as his specialty the analysis of disputed documents and sources. (As Nadine Fresco has shown, these claims add a touch of lunacy to his malice.)¹¹ Here he uses the *Daily Express* as his Crucial Source, and I suppose the reader who is likely to be impressed by his propaganda may not bother to ask about the nature of this newspaper in those days. But it is germane.

In 1933, the *Daily Express* was a sensationalist mass-circulation paper run by Lord Beaverbrook, a man of often eccentric views who felt no compunction about using his headlines to promote favorite causes or to denounce pet peeves.¹² During the early years of the Hitler regime he thought that Britain should avoid alliances with France and other threatened European countries. In a private letter in 1938, he expressed the fear that “The Jews may drive us into war.”¹³ But his most famous pronouncement of the period, delivered in the very same front-page headline style as the “Judea Declares War” item of 1933, came on September 30, 1938: “The Daily Express declares that Britain will not be involved in a European war this year, or next year either. Peace agreement signed at 12:30 a.m. today.”¹⁴

To Faurisson, nevertheless, *Daily Express* headlines represent the most weighty proof of what happened in history. And so important is this Crucial Source to the “revisionists” that Faurisson’s California outlet, the so-called Institute for Historical Review, sees fit to use it with just a bit of embroidery of its own: “Is it true that Jewish circles ‘declared war on Germany’? Yes it is. The media the world over carried headlines such as ‘Judea Declares War on Germany.’”¹⁵

Faurisson has been the object of legal challenges because of his strident, exhibitionist, unscrupulous defamations of Holocaust witnesses and respected scholars of the Holocaust. He has

also been suspended from his post at the University of Lyon for similar reasons.

The relationship between Chomsky and Faurisson's publisher, La Vieille Taupe (hereafter VT), has been chronicled in 1986 in two remarkably revealing documents. The first, by far the longer, is a narrative written by VT's leader, Pierre Guillaume; the second, much briefer, is a commentary on this narrative by Chomsky.¹⁶ Taken together, these documents tell us things that should cause embarrassment among Chomsky's American supporters. Guillaume begins by telling us that he first met Chomsky some time in 1979, having been introduced by Serge Thion, another member of the VT group. At this meeting, Guillaume told Chomsky about Faurisson and the various legal problems he'd begun to have. Then, says Guillaume, several months later and without any other contact having taken place between them, Chomsky signed and promoted the following petition (reproduced by Guillaume in its original English):

Dr. Robert Faurisson has served as a respected professor of twentieth-century French literature and document criticism for over four years at the University of Lyon-2 in France. Since 1974 he has been conducting extensive historical research into the "Holocaust" question.

Since he began making his findings public, Professor Faurisson has been subject to a vicious campaign of harassment, intimidation, slander and physical violence in a crude attempt to silence him. Fearful officials have even tried to stop him from further research by denying him access to public libraries and archives.

We strongly protest these efforts to deprive Professor Faurisson of his freedom of speech and expression, and we condemn the shameful campaign to silence him.

We strongly support Professor Faurisson's just right of academic freedom and we demand that university and government officials do everything possible to ensure his safety and the free exercise of his legal rights.

It is the publication of this petition in French newspapers, with Chomsky's name on top, that caused the first serious consternation among Chomsky's left-wing supporters in France and

elsewhere. The lamentable Alfred Lilienthal, the only other Jew of any notoriety with anti-Semitic connections, was also among the first signatories to the petition.¹⁷

Many civil libertarian readers objected to the petition's use of the word "findings" to characterize Faurisson's propaganda, seeing it as an endorsement of his work and thereby going beyond a defense of freedom of speech. Chomsky has tried to parry this objection by denying that "findings" means what it means.¹⁸ But it might also be pointed out that the petition describes Faurisson as being, among other things, "respected" for his "document criticism." In fact, Faurisson enjoys no such respect unless we count his following in the anti-Semitic lunatic fringe.¹⁹ In any case, according to Faurisson himself, the petition was originally drawn up not by a neutral civil libertarian but by Mark Weber, formerly an American professor of German who changed careers to become an apparently full-time "revisionist" propagandist.²⁰ According to Guillaume, the petition played a decisive role in gaining public acceptance for the "revisionist" movement in France; and most of all, it was the prestige of Chomsky's name that helped the crusade of Holocaust-denial.

Next, Guillaume tells us how helpful Chomsky has been to the VT movement in other ways. At a time when the VT suffered from ostracism on all sides, and when, moreover, Chomsky could have published a French version of his *Political Economy of Human Rights* (written with Edward Herman) with a French commercial firm, he nevertheless stood by his friends of the VT and published his book with them.

After the petition appeared, Guillaume tells us, Chomsky received a great many letters of complaint, which he shared with Guillaume. Chomsky told Guillaume that the principle of freedom of expression was threatened by such letters and that he wished to reply to them in a public way. Consequently, he composed a text of approximately 2,500 words, entitled "Some Elementary Comments Concerning the Right of Free Expression" (*Quelques commentaires élémentaires sur le droit à la liberté d'expression*). Here he declared that everyone should have the right of free speech, including fascists and anti-Semites, but that Faurisson is neither of these. Instead, according to Chomsky,

Faurisson is best described as “a sort of apolitical liberal.” For reasons that will become clear in a minute, this text later became known as “Chomsky’s Preface.”²¹

According to Guillaume, Chomsky sent this text to Serge Thion, VT’s writer and propagandist, asking him to make the best possible use of it. The text was dated October 11, 1980. On December 6, apparently having second thoughts, Chomsky wrote a follow-up letter to Guillaume complaining that, the state of hysteria in the world being what it is, the whole fight against imperialism could be sabotaged by a campaign that would associate him with neo-Nazism. (Chomsky has never been one to understate his own importance in the fate of the world.) Therefore, if it wasn’t too late, Chomsky strongly suggested that his text not be made part of a book by Faurisson. But alas for Chomsky and the whole anti-imperialist movement, it was too late. Faurisson’s book, with Chomsky’s text as preface, had already been published.

When Guillaume and Thion telephoned Chomsky on December 12, Chomsky’s reaction—as Guillaume tells it—was firm, clear and completely reassuring: he now stood by his preface and declared his letter of retrieval to be null and void.

Guillaume next reiterates the steadfastness of Chomsky’s support and even confesses that without it, the intrepid little band of “revisionists” might never have grown to its present strength. And all this is particularly remarkable, he adds, since Chomsky is being victimized in his own country, the United States, where the imperial ideology of the West has somehow been able to raise its ugly head once again. As a result, according to Guillaume, Chomsky’s home audience has been greatly reduced and his popularity endangered.

Guillaume is not insensitive to the problems posed by Chomsky’s ritualistic affirmations that his (Chomsky’s) views are “diametrically opposed to those of Faurisson.” Yes, but Guillaume understands the difference between a truth and a Wink. Each time that Chomsky has said his opinions remain “diametrically opposed” to those of Faurisson, he has done so in terms that are absolutely incapable of hurting Faurisson; and he has always indicated, by a word or a phrase, that his “diametrically

opposed" view was more a matter of opinion than of scientific knowledge.²²

Guillaume replies here to criticism from one Chantal Beauchamp, who, presuming to be more "revisionist" than he, had objected to VT's collaboration with what she apparently regarded as an inadequately neo-Nazi Chomsky. Guillaume says reassuringly: "Chomsky was involved in very taxing struggles.... Dramatic events were taking place in the Middle East. His own work—the exposure...of American imperialism there, of the realities of Zionism and of the state of Israel—took on an immediate significance, something that could lead to practical results. How is this work less important than Faurisson's...?"²³

The important work of Faurisson is the denial of the Holocaust. The important work of Chomsky is the struggle against Israel. And their common denominator, in the eyes of Guillaume and his followers, can only be anti-Semitism.

Now comes the most interesting part. Guillaume has told us how close a political friend Chomsky has been, how he sacrificed self-interest to political principle by publishing his book with *La Vielle Taupe* rather than with a mainstream house, how Chomsky's "diametric opposition" to Faurisson does not really mean what it seems, how Chomsky's work concerning Israel is part of the same overarching cause as Faurisson's denial of the Holocaust. And now, after all that, Guillaume adds that he submitted his report to Chomsky for possible corrections or disagreements. So Chomsky was given the opportunity to tell his story should it differ from that of Guillaume. And it turns out that Chomsky indeed has a demurral that he needs to press, and which Guillaume magnanimously publishes as a sort of addendum to his own report.

It seems that Guillaume got one very important point completely wrong. It is not about Jews, the Holocaust, or history. What Chomsky wants to correct is the falsehood that he is less popular in his own country now than he was in the days of Vietnam: "I cannot accept even a fraction of the many speaking invitations that I receive, and now it's no longer, as it was in the sixties, a matter of speaking to five people in a church. Now there are real crowds at colleges and in the community." That is the

sum total of Chomsky's correction. This confirms, in the most direct way possible, the close political collaboration between Chomsky and the French "revisionists."



Not only did Chomsky publish his *Political Economy of Human Rights* with Guillaume's organization; he also prepared a special booklet for Guillaume, not published anywhere else, of some of his self-justifying correspondence concerning the Faurisson affair. This publication, *Réponses inédites*, carries Chomsky's name as author and Guillaume's initials, "P.G.," as editor.²⁴ Guillaume explains that Chomsky has personally reviewed all translations from English to French.

For his part, Faurisson very frequently uses the Chomsky connection in his ceaseless pursuit of some sort of credibility. Bill Rubinstein of the University of Wales (who previously lived in Australia) reports that he originally learned of the Chomsky-Faurisson connection only when an Australian supporter of Faurisson flaunted correspondence that showed Chomsky furnishing Faurisson with information and advice.²⁵ It is just about impossible to come across a French "revisionist" publication—be it by Guillaume, Thion or Faurisson himself—that omits the obligatory reference to Chomsky's patronage.²⁶

What does Guillaume's movement do to deserve such warm friendship from the famous MIT linguist? The tiny movement of La Vieille Taupe, though having a history of quite different concerns that I will sketch later, is focused on Jew-baiting. Through a mini-empire of publishing enterprises, operating under its own name and others such as Spartacus and Éditions de la Différence, the movement brings out a flood of "revisionist" and anti-Semitic propaganda. First and foremost, it publishes numerous writings by and about Faurisson. It also features the notorious *The Myth of Auschwitz* by the German neo-Nazi Wilhelm Stäglich and several titles by the late "left-wing" anti-Semite Paul Rassinier.

Guillaume and his right-wing opposite number Ogmios published a very pretentiously presented quarterly journal,

Annales d'histoire révisioniste. In appearance this magazine resembles a scholarly publication, but its function is to show that the Holocaust never happened. The first two issues contain, among other items, translations of articles that previously appeared in the California neo-Nazi *Journal of Historical Review*.²⁷

In the spring of 1985, when the movie *Shoah* was screening in Paris, Guillaume—obviously seeking more notoriety—personally handed out leaflets in front of the theater. The leaflets denounced the “political-financial” swindle by all those who claim that Jews were killed by the Nazis. As Guillaume tells the story, the incident became the basis of a defamation suit brought against him by the International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism.²⁸

Chomsky has of course been criticized for his involvement with Faurisson and the VT movement, not least within the Left. He has sought to meet all such objections by saying: a) that he does not agree with Faurisson but is merely defending freedom of speech; b) that Faurisson and the VT are being maligned by opponents; and c) that the whole affair is unimportant and should not be discussed. Of these three arguments, only the first—the civil rights argument—needs detailed examination, which we shall give it later. The other points can be dealt with more summarily.

Chomsky has persistently misrepresented the politics of Faurisson and VT. In his famous “Preface” he calls Faurisson a liberal.²⁹ He has also seen fit to praise Faurisson’s associate Serge Thion as a “libertarian socialist scholar”³⁰ without mentioning that Thion has written lengthy books and articles to the effect that the Holocaust is a Jewish lie. Both Bill Rubinstein and I have sent detailed proof of Faurisson’s anti-Semitism to Chomsky. Most recently I sent him Faurisson’s article that declares all witnesses to the Holocaust at Auschwitz to be Jews and therefore liars,³¹ but Chomsky has remained obdurate. To Rubinstein he wrote the following:

I see no anti-Semitic implications in denial of the existence of gas chambers, or even denial of the holocaust. Nor would there be anti-Semitic implications, per se, in the claim that the holocaust

(whether one believes it took place or not) is being exploited, viciously so, by apologists for Israeli repression and violence. I see no hint of anti-Semitic implications in Faurisson's work.

Rubinstein published this excerpt from Chomsky's letter.³² As he does routinely, Chomsky objected to the publication of his correspondence, but he has not denied either the authenticity or the accuracy of the passage.

Chomsky and his friends ordinarily try to suppress all information concerning his neo-Nazi connections. The best-publicized case of such suppression involves the British linguist Geoffrey Sampson, who contributed the biographical sketch of Chomsky in the British publication *Biographical Companion to Modern Thought*. Sampson wrote a laudatory description of Chomsky's linguistics, but allowed himself the following few words of reservation about his politics:

He forfeited authority as a political commentator by a series of actions widely regarded as ill-judged (repeated polemics minimizing the Khmer Rouge atrocities in Cambodia; endorsement of a book—which Chomsky admitted he had not read—that denied the historical reality of the Jewish Holocaust).³³

Sampson has told the story of how Chomsky was able, through his influence with American publishers, to ban this contribution from the American (Harper's) edition of this reference work.³⁴

The Chomsky Reader, edited by James Peck, is a work that purports to “[bring] together for the first time the political thought of America's leading dissident intellectual.” It contains no reference to Faurisson, La Vieille Taupe, Guillaume, “revisionism” or any other topic that might give the reader an inkling of Chomsky's neo-Nazi involvements. The one mention of Thion in this volume suggests that this neo-Nazi crank is just another Marxist intellectual.



So far I have discussed only Chomsky's connections with the neo-Nazis of France, who seem to have been responsible for his recruitment to the cause. But the “revisionist” movement also

has an American branch, and Chomsky has become embroiled on this side of the Atlantic as well.

In its very first volume in 1980, the *Journal of Historical Review* carried an article about Jews by a Dr. Howard F. Stein that turned out to be a harbinger of the journal's future.³⁵ Even to someone well acquainted with anti-Semitic propaganda, Dr. Stein's piece must have come as a surprise for the sheer audacity of its malice.

In his appearance for the "revisionists," Stein presented a rather straightforward theory about the Holocaust: it is a Jewish myth. It seems that Jews have always fantasized about a Holocaust from the very beginning of their history. Perpetually needing to be victims, today they fantasize that they were victims of the Germans during the Second World War while being completely insensitive to the great sufferings of non-Jews, in particular Germans and Arabs. Stein also refers the reader to an earlier article he wrote in which he proposed that Jews are afflicted by a "Samson complex."³⁶ Like Samson in the Bible, apparently, Jews today are bound for self-destruction and seek to arrange matters so that they can destroy the rest of the world in the process. As we shall see, this is a view that Chomsky has also adopted.

I think it's an open secret that in the United States we have an intellectual underclass of self-described "academic" journals. These dreary periodicals cater to the foolish vanity of college administrators desirous of seeing "publications" by their faculty. Stein's articles, viewed purely from the perspective of scholarly competence, must lie at the very bottom even of this material: there is not a shred of actual evidence to be found in his many pages of jargon and free-floating confabulation. By itself, that would make them as harmless as almost all this trivial pulp. But Stein's writings have enlisted jargon-mongering in the cause of spite and hate, and this catapults them into a category quite by themselves.

Dr. Stein has achieved some international recognition for his contribution to the hatred of Jews. The French journal of the "revisionists," edited by Chomsky's friend Pierre Guillaume, has published a translation of the original 1980 article.³⁷

Compared with Stein's malicious diatribes, other *JHR* articles will seem run-of-the-mill. The last issue I reviewed, that of Winter 1986–87, carries an article by Faurisson on SS commander Rudolf Höss and another piece complaining about an unjust persecution of the (Nazi) German-American Bund in the United States during World War II. A book review tells us that when the Nazis established the Warsaw ghetto, "essentially, the German decision was Jewish, since Jews oppose intermarriages, and insist on their own built-in laws. The Germans also had to fear Polish inspired pogroms against the Jews. The wall prevented that as well."

Canadian Customs authorities have declared this nice journal to be hate literature and have prohibited its import into Canada. Consequently I have been unable to check every issue of it and I don't know how often Chomsky has contributed to it. I do have before me the issue for Spring 1986, which contains an article by Noam Chomsky entitled "All Denials of Free Speech Undercut a Democratic Society."³⁸ This piece contains about 2,200 words and is reprinted from the *Camera* of Boulder, Colorado.

Subscribers to the *JHR* receive lists of books and tapes that the "revisionists" consider necessary for a proper education. Some of this material is under the aegis of Noontide Press, which, like the Institute for Historical Review, is located in Torrance, California. My latest *Catalogue of Historical Revisionist Books* includes, among other items, the following titles: *The Zionist Connection II*, by Alfred M. Lilienthal; *Communism with the Mask Off*, by Dr. Joseph Goebbels; and *Fateful Triangle*, by Noam Chomsky. A special book list of Noontide Press dealing with what it calls "Jewish Studies" includes *The International Jew*, by Henry Ford Sr.; *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* ("translated from Russian"); *The Plot against Christianity*, by Elizabeth Dilling ("A shattering exposé of the anti-Christian hate campaign propounded in the Babylonian Talmud"); and other such classics.

The institute also sells two separate tapes of a speech that Chomsky gave against Israel, with these words of promotion:

This lecture...is, to put it mildly, devastating. In two hours of unin-

errupted cannonade directed squarely at U.S. foreign policy with regard to Israel, Chomsky ranges brilliantly over such topics as Israeli imperialism...the role of the Anti-Defamation League (“...one of the ugliest, most powerful groups in America”), Media suppression, distortion, hypocrisy, and the “Memory Hole.” An intense two-and-a-half hour mini-course on the political issue of our age, including Chomsky’s answers to audience questions.

I have repeatedly called Chomsky’s attention to the neo-Nazis’ use of his name and his materials, suggesting that he disassociate himself from these people, but he has ignored such suggestions.

A Matter of Freedom of Speech?

As we have seen, Chomsky boasts that he will defend the freedom of expression of anyone, anytime, presumably regarding anything, and that he doesn’t need to see the disputed material in order to defend its right to be heard and published. Bill Rubinstein has already pointed out that this proposition can hardly be taken seriously since there *must* be limits to freedom of speech in any society. An immediate example is the necessity to prohibit commercial fraud. But neither fraud, nor defamation, nor public mischief of any sort can deter what Chomsky likes to call his “Enlightenment values.”

For Chomsky, there is no question that the “revisionist” neo-Nazis should be given complete freedom of speech in Western countries. (Attempts to restrain them have so far been made only in West Germany, France and Canada.) He never tires of proclaiming that freedom of expression should know no limits, his citation of Voltaire settling the matter to his satisfaction.

I myself have been less than happy with the prosecution of the neo-Nazis in Canada, and I am not convinced that the legal prosecution of Faurisson in France is justified. But because questions of both defamation and fraud must be addressed, the issue is a great deal more complex than Chomsky lets on. Faurisson and his followers have engaged in a relentless campaign of libel and slander—always couched in very personal terms—against the witnesses and the scholars of the Holocaust. Furthermore, as

the transcript from the trial of the Holocaust-denier Ernst Zundel in Canada makes clear, the “revisionists” are motivated by malice and not by any historical conviction.

As is generally the case when extremists face legal difficulties, the neo-Nazis today have two kinds of supporters: on the one hand, those who wish them well because they are sympathetic to their cause; and on the other, those who identify themselves as civil libertarians. Since nobody nowadays likes to be recognized as a Nazi sympathizer, just about everyone who supports the neo-Nazis puts himself in the civil libertarian camp. The trick is to tell who is who.

There is, of course, no difficulty to this. We all know civil libertarians: we know who they are, what they do, how they do it. In America they are akin to the founders and leaders of the American Civil Liberties Union, and, like them or not, they are liberal by persuasion, liberal by style and culture. They have a record of defending a variety of unpopular groups, not just one. And while they will give legal aid to Nazis, they will not associate with Nazis, collaborate with Nazis politically, publish their books with Nazi publishers, or allow their articles to be printed in Nazi journals. On these counts alone, Chomsky is no civil libertarian.

Chomsky misleads us when he describes how he was recruited to the Faurisson cause. He tries to create the impression that it was civil libertarians who recruited him: “In the fall of 1979, I was asked by Serge Thion, a libertarian socialist scholar with a record of opposition to all forms of totalitarianism, to sign a petition....”³⁹ The plain truth is that Thion was already a partisan of Faurisson at the time, a man second only to Faurisson himself in the propaganda that declares the Holocaust to be a Jewish lie. Insofar as Chomsky is a political friend of Thion’s—and he certainly seems to have been one as late as 1987⁴⁰—Chomsky must be considered a political friend of these neo-Nazis and not the disinterested champion of free speech that he pretends to be.

There is also the issue of Chomsky’s attitudes toward the civil liberties of individuals and causes that he particularly dislikes: first, those who have dared to criticize him; and second, the Jews who are persecuted in Russia and in the Arab world. On

these matters, his record is anything but civil libertarian. We have seen that the British linguist Geoffrey Sampson, having published some mildly critical remarks on Chomsky in a British work of reference, was banned from the American edition of that work. Chomsky denies that he was instrumental in this ban, but his testimony is not convincing because he also argues in favor of censoring Sampson:

With regard to a book, readers can form their own conclusions. But an entry in a reference work is something quite different. Readers rely on the reputation of the editors to guarantee that what is presented is accurate, not fabrication and mere slander as in this case; and the editors surely have a responsibility to justify this trust.⁴¹

In other words, general books may enjoy freedom, but reference books—well, that’s an entirely different story. Chomsky is fond of making up obfuscating little rules like that. But who is fooled? The record here is very clear: Chomsky will gladly violate his professed principles if it’s a matter of silencing his critics.

Are there any other limits to Chomsky’s generosity on the matter of civil rights? He says that he has been privately active on behalf of individual dissidents in the Soviet Union, but he has never, insofar as I have been able to determine, endorsed or aided the movement to allow the emigration of Soviet Jews. I have written to him about this, and I have also most particularly asked him to intervene on behalf of the Jews of Syria.⁴² I was rewarded by a number of vituperative letters from him, but on the matter of the oppressed Jews he has remained absolutely obdurate. So when he tells us that he never refuses to sign petitions on behalf of civil rights, he forgets to mention that he does make a tiny little exception when it comes to the rights of oppressed Jews.⁴³

To round out the picture of Chomsky’s relationship to Faurisson and the neo-Nazi movement, something needs to be said about his repeated assurances that he disagrees “diametrically” with Faurisson, that in his opinion the Holocaust did occur. In fact, Chomsky has very few words to say about the subject, but they are words he uses often. By way of an obiter dictum in an

earlier book, *Peace in the Middle East?*, he allowed that the Holocaust had been “the most fantastic outburst of collective insanity in human history.” Now, whenever his relationship to the neo-Nazis is in any way challenged, he trots out these same words, quoting himself verbatim, neither adding nor subtracting from this ten-word formula. The abracadabra nature of this declaration carries little evidence of conviction and certainly lacks in persuasive power. Nevertheless, with respect to the historical reality of the Holocaust and when writing for an American audience, Chomsky obviously does not wish to be counted among the neo-Nazis. On the other hand, as we have learned from Guillaume above and from the published record as well, Chomsky is also very careful not to let this little disagreement with the neo-Nazis spoil his good relationship with them. He wrote to Rubinstein that there is nothing anti-Semitic about Holocaust-denial; he agreed with Guillaume that belief on his (Chomsky’s) part in the historical reality of the Holocaust was a purely personal opinion—a sort of quirk—and was not to be regarded as implying criticism of Faurisson’s “scholarly” work.

Chomsky has a well-earned reputation as a vituperative political polemicist. He has a ready store of invective and he is not stingy with it when attacking the state of Israel or anyone to whom that state is dear. But aside from the ten-word self-exculpatory formula that I have quoted, Chomsky has never, to my knowledge, seen fit to criticize Faurisson or any other neo-Nazi. His “diametric” disagreement with such people is obviously not something that occupies him very seriously.

From Marlen to Faurisson

Faurisson is of course not the first to put forward preposterous ideas or to use pseudo-rational methods in the process. Jacques Baynac and Nadine Fresco have recently reminded us that a certain Jean-Baptiste Pères denied as early as 1827 that Napoleon had ever existed.⁴⁴ Today the California-based Flat Earth Research Society International, only a stone’s throw from the Institute for Historical Review, assures us that it can “prove [the] earth flat by experiment, demonstrated and demonstrable. Earth

Flat is a Fact, not a 'theory.' ...Australians do not hang by their feet under the world." There is a proof for everything.

It is one of the misfortunes of the left wing, both in Europe and in America, to have been afflicted with more than its share of Flat Earthers. Many of these marginal socialist and anarchist illuminati are adepts of the doctrine of malign equivalence: they see all governments as basically "capitalist" (including that of the Soviet Union), and they find all these "capitalist" governments to be equally reprehensible. The autobiographical part of *The Chomsky Reader* shows us how Chomsky has adhered to such doctrines, from his earliest days to the present.⁴⁵ But we shall also see how both he and La Vieille Taupe have gone beyond this anarcho-Marxist tradition to arrive at what amounts to a justification of Nazi Germany.

Chomsky tells us that he was fascinated by the "Marlenites" when he was a boy of fifteen or sixteen. This was around 1944 or 1945. Insofar as I can reconstruct it now, this ex-Trotskyist splinter group thought that the war was "phony" and that the Western Allies, the Soviet Union and the Axis powers were all conspiring against the international proletariat. All sides represented the bourgeoisie (including the Stalinist "burocracy," as Marlen liked to spell it), all sides oppressed the workers, all sides were in every way morally equivalent. Chomsky now says that he "never really believed the thesis, but...found it intriguing enough to try to figure out what they were talking about."⁴⁶

In any case, Chomsky gives only the faintest of nods to Marlenism in his autobiographical musings. His real political mentors, he says, are Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Korsch, Paul Mattick, Anton Pannekoek and some others.⁴⁷ These writers are the founders of "Council Communism," and, as it happens, the very ones whom the "revisionist" La Vieille Taupe also claims as among its guides and teachers. Chomsky and VT thus have common professed ideological roots, Council Communism, and Chomsky is less than forthright when he suppresses this ideological tie in his autobiographical sketch and elsewhere.

Council Communism began as a small sect of left-wing, oppositionist German Communists in the 1920s who were in revolt against Moscow's domination of the German Communist

Party.⁴⁸ Basing themselves partly on the anti-Bolshevist writings of Rosa Luxemburg, the group developed profound differences with the Communist International on organizational matters. It rejected the notion of a “dictatorship of the proletariat” as exercised by a party or a state, instead advocating independent councils of workers as the socialist form of government. Under the influence of writers like Paul Mattick and Karl Korsch (both of whom emigrated to the United States, where they died after the war), Council Communists became fierce opponents of Stalin, were persecuted by both Stalin and Hitler, and in general maintained standards of political ethics that were widely admired.

Council Communists were much more consistent than Trotskyists in their opposition to Bolshevik tyranny, although they shared certain attitudes with both Trotskyists and anarchists during the Second World War. Wherever they could exist in Europe and America, these little groups and grouplets held to a radical antiwar position; they thought that neither the Axis nor the Allies merited their support. Unlike most of the Trotskyist groups, both Council Communists and the anarchists applied this antiwar position to the Soviet Union as well as to the West and the Axis. But none of these groups, and nobody in them, had anything but hatred for the Nazis. They all supported the resistance in Nazi-occupied Europe, and culturally and practically, insofar as they had any influence anywhere, they were part of the overall anti-Nazi front of all decent people. The current pro-Nazi position of *La Vieille Taupe* is, as far as I know, the first time that a group with authentically left-wing origins has broken ranks with this front.

The history of *La Vieille Taupe* has been told by Pierre Vidal-Naquet and Alain Finkielkraut.⁴⁹ A group of ex-Trotskyists led by Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort broke with Bolshevism in the late 1940s to start a movement called “*Socialisme ou Barbarie*,” with ideas broadly resembling those of the Council Communists.⁵⁰ Many splits and mergers later, toward the end of the 1960s, one of the resulting grouplets named itself *La Vieille Taupe*. By about 1970, VT began to develop ideas and activities that contrasted very sharply with any of its ideological ancestors.

It had inherited a thoroughgoing rejection of “bourgeois” society, and also a tendency to equate “capitalist tyranny” with “fascism.” But now, partly under the influence of certain ultra-leftist Italians (Bordigists), it began to reject the one article of faith that had hitherto been a common denominator for everyone on the Left: antifascism.

At first it was a matter of declaring Nazism no worse than the “bourgeois” capitalism of the West, of finding the Axis no more guilty than the Allies of crimes against the working class. Such, roughly, were the ideas of the first anti-Semitic writer whom La Vieille Taupe saw fit to promote: the ex-Communist, former concentration camp inmate Paul Rassinier, now deceased. (“Revisionists” from Paris to California still accord him pride of place as the father of their particular branch of knowledge.) But from Rassinier to Faurisson, whom VT discovered in 1978 and has promoted ever since, the group became more and more openly anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi, a process that culminated in 1986 when it published the 520-page screed of one of the most strident of the German postwar Nazis, Wilhelm Stäglich.

For this essay, I corresponded with some veterans of Council Communism and other far-left groups in France and elsewhere. My informants were unanimous in their assessments that Guillaume and his Vieille Taupe are, apart from his two or three tiny front groups, absolutely and completely alone in this trajectory from anti-Stalinist radicalism to neo-Nazism. As one particularly knowledgeable correspondent put it, “Neither the Trotskyists nor the Council Communists can be held even indirectly responsible for Guillaume’s wanderings.” Authentic Council Communists will not have anything to do with him. Paul Mattick was one of the respected thinkers of this movement, and his son, Paul Mattick Jr., wrote to me as follows: “A few years ago, Guillaume offered to publish a French translation of my father’s last book, but we (my mother and I) of course refused him the right, as we do not want to be associated with those crazy people.”

Estimates of the number of Guillaume followers range from about ten to about thirty. Veterans of the Left shun him; scholars

laugh at him. But Guillaume does have two things going for him: first, as we saw, he seems to have ample finances; second, he has Noam Chomsky.

The “Documentary” Basis of Anti-Zionism

Chomsky’s most ambitious book about the Jews and Israel, published in 1983, is entitled *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians*. It purports to review the history and current status of the Arab–Israel dispute as well as the role of the United States in it. Like other political writings of Chomsky’s, this one has been widely praised by his supporters for its wealth of “facts” and documentation. And as we have seen, *Fateful Triangle* is featured as a star item on the booklists of organized anti-Semitism.

The violence between Arabs and Jews—who did what, when, and to whom—is naturally a subject of much contention. Two events in the modern history of Arab–Jewish relations have most particularly demanded the attention of both scholarly and propagandistic writers: the riots of 1929 in Hebron and elsewhere, and the War of Independence in 1948. Enough about these is known to serve as touchstones for those who would write rationally about Arabs and Jews. I propose to examine Chomsky’s treatment of them, not only to study his point of view but also to see whether his methods conform to a modicum of scholarly objectivity.

The 1929 Violence

Chomsky devotes two paragraphs, one of main text and one long footnote, to the 1929 events. The text, on page 90, reads as follows:

The [Arabs] never accepted the legitimacy of [Balfour’s] point of view, and resisted in a variety of ways. They repeatedly resorted to terrorist violence against Jews. The most extreme case was in late August 1929, when 133 Jews were massacred. The “most ghastly incident” was in Hebron, where 60 Jews were killed, most of them from an old Jewish community, largely anti-Zionist; the Arab police “stood passively by while their fellow Moslems moved into

the town and proceeded to deeds which would have been revolting among animals,” and a still greater slaughter was prevented only by the bravery of one member of the vastly undermanned British police.* Many were saved by Muslim neighbors.**

I have shown the note references—one with a single asterisk and the other with a double asterisk—as they appear in Chomsky’s original. The first is a source note, found on page 169, and it says: “Ibid., pp. 109–10, 123,” a reference to *Cross Roads to Israel*, by Christopher Sykes.

The double asterisk marks a footnote at the bottom of pages 90 and 91, which reads:

The massacre followed a demonstration organized at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem to counter “Arab arrogance”—a major provocation even in the eyes of Jewish public opinion. (Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, p. 96). See Sheean, in Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, for a detailed eyewitness account. This provocation was organized by Betar, the youth movement of Vladimir Jabotinsky’s Revisionist organization, which is the precursor of Begin’s Herut, the central element in the Likud coalition. The very name, “Betar,” reflects the cynicism of this fascist-style movement, which, in Flapan’s words, described Hitler “as the savior of Germany, Mussolini as the political genius of the century,” and often acted accordingly. The name is an acronym for “Brith Yosef Trumpeldor” (“The Covenant of Joseph Trumpeldor”). Trumpeldor was killed defending the northern settlement of Tel Hai from Bedouin attackers; Jabotinsky “opposed the Labor call for mobilization to help the threatened settlements.” (Flapan, p. 104).⁵¹

Chomsky acknowledges in the text that a slaughter of the Jews of Hebron took place and he borrows words from Sykes to show that this was “ghastly.” (Although borrowed from Sykes and in quotation marks, the word “ghastly” may well be used later by him and his friends as proof of his sensitivity to Jewish suffering. As we have seen, Chomsky is fond of planting such self-exculpating formulas.) But he is also quick to give us two separate sets of justification for the Arab assassins at Hebron. The first comes at the very beginning of the main paragraph: the killings were part of the “resistance” of Arabs against the Balfour plan for a Jewish national home.⁵² The second is more elaborate

and takes up the whole of the asterisked footnote: it seems that the killings were “provoked” by a “fascist-style” Jewish youth organization, Betar.

How does Chomsky document his charge of “provocation”? He cites three references in this footnote: a) Simha Flapan concerning the import of Betar’s demonstration in Jerusalem; b) Vincent Sheean, the “eyewitness” to the same demonstration; and finally c) Flapan again, this time concerning the nature of Betar. Let’s consider all three as a way of evaluating Chomsky’s “scholarship.”

Flapan on the Betar Demonstration

Simha Flapan was a left-wing Israeli editor and polemical writer and indeed says that Betar’s 1929 demonstration “led to the bloody riots and disturbances.” But Flapan mentions the incident only in passing, gives no evidence for his assertion, and in any case is no historical expert. Chomsky here quotes the unsupported opinion of an unqualified writer as if he were an authority and as if such a citation constituted evidence.

It so happens that there is now a scholarly literature concerning the 1929 events, and all such scholarly writing takes as one of its starting points the report of the Shaw Commission of Inquiry that was appointed by the British government. Chomsky does not mention this report, although it is probably the most detailed description of the facts as far as they could be ascertained. One reliable guide to the various claims is contained in Y. Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918–1929*. Chomsky professes to respect this work and he quotes it as an authority elsewhere in his book.⁵³ Porath takes pains to give an account of the provocative actions by both Jews and Arabs in the period preceding the 1929 events. Concerning the demonstrations by Betar, Porath’s judgment is as follows: “While it is true that the demonstration by Betar...at the Wailing Wall on Tishea Be-Av (15th August 1929) prompted the Muslim demonstration there the next day...the bloody [Hebron] outbreaks occurred a week later and not necessarily in response to the Jewish demonstration.”⁵⁴

Porath is known for his sympathies for the Arab national movement, and Chomsky quotes him with approval concerning

the Lebanon war.⁵⁵ But when Porath writes in his most professional capacity, that is, as a historian of the Arab–Jewish entanglement, Chomsky chooses to ignore him.

Chomsky's slighting of Christopher Sykes is equally reprehensible. He quotes Sykes in his main paragraph as an authority on the Hebron riots, but suppresses what Sykes has to say in connection with the alleged "provocation" by Betar. Sykes actually gives a general account of the background similar to Porath's: a Jewish boy had been killed in Jerusalem in the days leading to the serious riots; both Jews and Arabs had been embroiled in provocative acts. Referring to the days immediately before Betar's demonstration, Sykes writes that "the atmosphere in Jerusalem was daily growing more tense and the goading policy of the Supreme Moslem Council over the Wailing Wall had the desired effect of driving Jews to exasperation."⁵⁶

In fact, all historians agree that Arabs and Jews had been involved in reciprocal provocation; but Chomsky, ignoring all this testimony in favor of the obiter dictum of a journalist, finds fault only with the Jews.

Vincent Sheean, Eyewitness

Betar's demonstration, of course, had hundreds of "eyewitnesses." One of these, the American journalist Vincent Sheean, has claimed that his presence at the Jerusalem demonstration qualifies him to pass judgment on what happened a week later in Hebron, which he did not witness. Sheean tells us that prior to the 1929 events he had been very much pro-Zionist, but the Jewish demonstrations in August of that year, which he blames for all the subsequent bloodshed, turned him into a convinced anti-Zionist ever after.

Sheean included his reminiscences of these events, entitled "Holy Land," in his collected essays entitled *Personal History*.⁵⁷ The book was published by standard American and British publishers and is widely available in research libraries. But Chomsky's reference is not to this book. He cites a greatly abbreviated reprint of the Sheean essay in an anthology entitled *From Haven to Conquest*, edited by Professor Walid Khalidi and published by the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, in 1971.

Unlike Chomsky, Professor Khalidi does not profess neutrality between Jew and Arab. He dedicates his volume "To all Palestine Arabs under Israeli occupation" and explains how he selected the various snippets for his book: "Any anthology is selective by definition. The items in this anthology have been selected to illustrate the central theme in the Palestine tragedy, which is the process by which Zionism has sought to wrest control of Palestine and its surroundings from the Arabs."⁵⁸ Naturally, materials that do not "illustrate the central theme" are not included. Chomsky relies heavily on Khalidi's anthology in *Fateful Triangle*, citing it over and over again.

The unabridged version of Sheean's reminiscences gives us valuable clues about his credibility. For instance, he reports "the pogrom heritage" of Jewish people that he observed in Palestine and elsewhere, the unbelievably irrational fear that harm might come to them simply because they were Jews. "It was a state of mind I had never seen before, and it required a powerful effort of the imagination to understand it," Sheean writes.⁵⁹ But understand it he could not, and what he judged to be Jewish irrational fears, both in Palestine and in general, are cited as reasons for his remarkably sudden conversion from pro-Zionism to anti-Zionism. He published these impressions in 1935, after Hitler's seizure of power in Germany but before the Holocaust, and of course he was not alone in his failure to appreciate the exceptional realism of the Zionists of 1929. But alone or not, Sheean's state of mind at the time does not exactly add to his qualifications as an informed observer. Perhaps for this reason, the passages in question are not reproduced in Khalidi's version of the essay.

Sheean's unexpurgated essay also shows high esteem for al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem: "But the Grand Mufti kept his head; the better I knew him the more I realized that he was a man of remarkable character, extraordinary inner calm and certainty. He never got excited, he was always open to reason, and he never rejected an argument or a suggestion without examining it carefully." When Sheean published these lines in 1935, he may not have known that two years earlier, immediately after the Nazi seizure of power, the Grand

Mufti had conveyed his admiration and support to the Hitler government, praising in particular the anti-Semitic policies of the Nazis.

But Sheean should have known, as all informed observers have testified, that al-Husayni played an important part in inflaming Arab violence against Jews throughout the 1920s. Since the Second World War, the Grand Mufti has become an embarrassment for partisans of the Arab side. The original Sheean publication must have been among the very last in which a reputable Western writer expressed admiration for him. In Khalidi's version of Sheean, the one cited by Chomsky, all praise of the Mufti is suppressed, as well it might be. But without these passages, the reader is deprived of one of the most important clues as to Sheean's lack of credibility.

In brief, Chomsky ignores the scholarly literature on the 1929 riots. Had he reported the contents of this literature to his readers, his pro-Arab and anti-Jewish charges could not have been sustained. He cites the testimony of only one eyewitness when many were available, and the witness he uses has been pre-selected for him by an anthology of pro-Arab writings. Finally, he suppresses all information that would enable the reader to assess the credibility of his witness.

The "Fascist" Betar

Finally, Chomsky charges that Betar, the youth organization of the Zionist Revisionist movement, not only was "fascist-style" but actually praised Hitler, presumably as part of its general political stance in 1929. (In 1929, Hitler had not yet come to power and was barely known outside of Germany, but let that pass.) Chomsky again draws on the left-wing Israeli writer Simha Flapan, who had little to say about the Hebron incident but devotes a whole chapter to Zionist Revisionism.

Chomsky, whose full passage I have quoted above, speaks of Betar as "this fascist-style movement, which, in Flapan's words, describes Hitler 'as the savior of Germany, Mussolini as the political genius of the century.'" Chomsky doesn't tell us where he found this in Flapan, perhaps because Flapan wrote something just a little bit different:

The violent anti-labor campaign, accompanied as it was by venomous propaganda, brawls and physical violence on both sides, created in the 1930s a tension resembling a state of civil war [between Labor Zionists and Zionist Revisionists]. The attempt to challenge the labor hegemony failed and boomeranged against the Revisionists themselves. They earned for themselves a reputation as fascists due to the viciousness of the anti-socialist propaganda, their unbridled hatred of kibbutzim, their “character assassinations”, the unconcealed sympathy of some members towards the authoritarian regimes (Hitler, for example, was described as the savior of Germany, Mussolini as the political genius of the century).⁶⁰

Chomsky has Flapan claim that Betar as such embraced Hitler and Mussolini, but Flapan says only that “*some* members” had such sympathies. The *some*, which makes all the difference and completely changes the meaning, is suppressed by Chomsky.

But this outrageous misquotation aside, Flapan does maintain that there was some sympathy for Hitler in Betar. How does he know this? To what extent can we trust—or should Chomsky have trusted—Flapan as an expert on Betar and the Zionist Revisionist movement? Like Chomsky, Flapan is often cited by Arab and other “anti-Zionist” propagandists. Like Chomsky, Flapan’s articles have appeared in journals hostile to Israel. But Flapan’s work has a certain inner integrity, and he likes to inform us how he has come to know what he says he knows. So he appends a little note at the end of his chapter on the Revisionists:

Shortage of time did not allow me to look for and peruse primary sources. Rather, I had to rely mainly on personal recollections of events I have lived through and experienced as a member of the Zionist-Socialist Movement, Hashomer Hatzair.... I have checked these recollections against the official literature of the Revisionist Party.⁶¹

Those with recollections of the Zionist youth movement some forty years ago will remember, as Flapan does, that members of Hashomer Hatzair would indeed refer to Betar as “fascist,” and that Betar knew how to return such compliments with epithets of its own. What Flapan remembers about such youthful name-calling tells us at least as much about Hashomer

Hatzair as it does about Betar. Flapan does not cite any direct source, Zionist Revisionist or otherwise, for his assertion that even as many as “some” Betar members admired Hitler. And had he seen any praise of Hitler in the “official literature of the Revisionist Party,” we can be sure he would have cited it. He doesn’t.

Flapan is loose about his charge, yet he remains within the polemical style of 1930s youthful Zionism. Chomsky goes a few steps further: he drops the crucial modifier “some”; he projects back into the 1920s what Flapan describes about the 1930s; he disregards the tenuous and hearsay nature of this evidence. These steps allow Chomsky to flaunt his alleged proof that the Jewish demonstrators in Jerusalem in 1929 were fundamentally no different from Nazis.

*“The Zionists are like Hitler,”
and the Question of the Mufti*

Fateful Triangle contains twelve references to Hitler. In each case, some Jewish action is said to be like Hitler’s, or some attribute of the state of Israel or the Zionist movement reminds Chomsky of Hitler. It is clear that Chomsky is fascinated by Hitler in a book that ostensibly deals with the history of Palestine, with Israel and with the Arabs; so it’s surprising that he has completely overlooked the one political movement in Palestine that openly declared its allegiance to Hitler: the Arab nationalist movement led by al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. By now, every schoolboy knows about the Mufti’s great power and prestige among the Arab population of Palestine during the British Mandate, about the Mufti’s admiration for Hitler, about his banishment from Palestine by the British during the Second World War, about his state visit to Hitler in 1943, about the embarrassed distance that today’s Arab leaders try to maintain from anything that might evoke his name.

Yet in Chomsky’s book there is no mention of al-Husayni or his movement, no hint that such a movement may well have justified fears among Jews—nothing at all to tell the reader that there ever was a Grand Mufti of Jerusalem who collaborated with the Nazis. Like the Ministry of Truth in George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Chomsky has consigned the Mufti’s name

to a hole in which, he no doubt hopes, its memory will be consumed by flames.⁶²

Deir Yassin and Other Atrocities

Chomsky devotes four pages of *Fateful Triangle* to a section he entitles “The War of Independence/Conquest.” Much of this section bears no ascertainable relationship to the struggle of 1948, and reports of actual violence are confined to parts of two pages. Chomsky introduces this discussion with the impartial observation—self-exculpatory in its judiciousness—that there had been “terror and violence on both sides.” But his impartiality vanishes very soon because the only two concrete examples of violence that he shares with his readers happen to be allegations against Jews. First he briefly mentions a Haganah operation at Khissas in December 1947, reporting the Haganah as “killing 10 Arabs, including one woman and four children.” The rest of this section is devoted to events at the Arab village of Deir Yassin.⁶³

There are a number of reports concerning this incident of April 8, 1948, but the main facts are not in dispute. Formations of the right-wing Jewish fighting organizations Irgun Tsvai Leumi (“Etsel”) and Lokhamei Kherut Yisrael (“Lekhi,” also known abroad as the “Stern Gang”) seized the village, and in the ensuing events 254 Arab men, women and children lost their lives. The behavior of the two Jewish groups was condemned by the official organs of the Jewish community, and Ben-Gurion sent a telegram of apology and regret to King Abdullah.

The Deir Yassin episode is reported by all those who write about the history of Israel, but, as we would expect, the treatment varies in accordance with the bias and predispositions of the writer. Jewish and Zionist writers that I have consulted do not seek to hide the horror of the incident.⁶⁴ The more-or-less neutral Sykes, recommended by Chomsky for background reading, gives a balanced report and seeks to understand the military motives behind the events. Sykes does not in any way excuse or justify the attackers, but he accepts their word that the action had been directed against a military post in the midst of the village and that the Arab inhabitants had been urged by the Jewish forces to leave prior to the attack.⁶⁵

Be that as it may, all reasonable commentators place Deir Yassin in the context of the ongoing hostilities. Chomsky omits this context completely. He does not mention, for example, that three days after Deir Yassin, seventy-seven Jewish doctors, nurses and associated university personnel, traveling in a Red Cross convoy, were killed by an Arab ambush. Many similar outrages occurred in the same period, and neutral observers find blame on both sides. (Nobody in the Arab world, at least no official source, expressed regret for the killing of the Jewish doctors, or for any of the other Arab attacks on Jewish civilians.) Chomsky's discussion of Deir Yassin has at least three characteristics that distinguish it from any fair-minded comment that could be made. First, and in stark contrast to his treatment of Arab terrorism in Hebron and elsewhere, his description of Deir Yassin portrays a completely unprovoked, thoroughly sadistic Jewish atrocity. He comes back to this Deir Yassin "atrocity" throughout the book, mentioning it in all kinds of contexts, always to show the total depravity of the Jewish Zionist enterprise. Second, as we just noted, he completely suppresses the context of violence and counterviolence in which Deir Yassin took place. Third, he treats Deir Yassin as the only military action worth talking about in the War of Independence, thus turning this episode into an emblem of the whole Arab-Jewish relationship.

Deir Yassin is to Chomsky and his colleagues what Dresden is to those who would justify the Nazis. To apologists of the Third Reich—and of course they overlap with the "anti-Zionists"—there is only one event in the Second World War that counts: the Allied bombing of Dresden in 1945 and the heavy loss of German civilian life that it entailed. The neo-Nazi Holocaust-deniers refer to Dresden as the only real holocaust of the war. Dresden and Deir Yassin were terrible tragedies, but the Holocaust-deniers and anti-Zionists, separately and together, celebrate these events as if their retelling in mythic form constituted a punishment of and victory over the Jews of our time.

Chomsky ends *Fateful Triangle* by embracing the notion of a "Samson complex." He says that the greatest trouble spot on earth, barring none, is the conflict between Israel and the

Arabs.⁶⁶ The government and people of the Zionist state are basing themselves on “the genocidal texts of the Bible” and may well decide to commit national suicide and precipitate the final destruction of the planet by plunging the world into nuclear war. “This ‘Samson complex’ is not something to be taken lightly,” Chomsky pronounces.⁶⁷

This notion of a “Samson complex,” much like what Howard Stein elaborated, in many ways resembles the medieval blood libel against the Jewish people. Stein and Chomsky suggest, both explicitly and by implication, that Jews are exceedingly dangerous beings, that they lack the human qualities of reason and mercy, and that they are possessed by a blind hatred of non-Jewish mankind. Even some of Chomsky’s supporters find this Samson doctrine too extreme to take seriously.⁶⁸

Conclusion

I have described the politics of Noam Chomsky insofar as they relate to neo-Nazism, and I have also shown something about Chomsky’s associates: Faurisson, Guillaume, Thion, the Institute for Historical Review. Chomsky’s propaganda, taken by itself, is obnoxious and certainly hostile to Jews, but still doesn’t have quite the same character as that of his associates. Where they are frankly neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic, he fudges and covers himself with self-exculpatory formulas. Were it not for his associates, we would certainly wish to acknowledge a line between him and organized anti-Semitism.

The reader will have to judge for himself what to make of Chomsky’s choice of political friends. My view of the issue is that his associates are in the business of justifying the Nazis and that Chomsky helps them carry on this business, not simply as a defender of freedom of speech but as a warm and reliable ally.

Much nonsense has been written about the alleged fallacy of “guilt by association.” True, if Noam Chomsky happened to be associated with Faurisson and Thion in a tennis club, that connection would not make him a neo-Nazi. But in fact, we saw that Chomsky justified Faurisson’s Holocaust-denial, published his own books with neo-Nazi publishers, wrote for a neo-Nazi

journal, and allowed the neo-Nazis to promote his books and tapes together with the works of Joseph Goebbels. That is not mere accidental association, particularly when Chomsky's writings on Jews and Israel are taken into account. It is this complex of anti-Semitic activities and neo-Nazi associations, not his professed ideas alone, that constitutes the Chomsky phenomenon.

NOTES

This is a condensation of a longer study. This version copyright 2004 by Werner Cohn. For the complete text of this work, please consult <http://wernercohn.com/Chomsky.html>.

¹ *Lies of Our Times*, January 1, 1990.

² When Shahak staged a particularly fraudulent publicity stunt—he tried to have people believe that orthodox Jews will not save a non-Jewish life on the Sabbath—Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits exposed him. See Jakobovits’s “A Modern Blood Libel: L’Affaire Shahak,” *Tradition*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1966), pp. 58–65.

³ Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion* (London and Boulder, Col., 1994).

⁴ Chomsky also contributed an introduction to an earlier pamphlet by Shahak, *Israel’s Global Role: Weapons for Repression*, an anti-Israel diatribe published by the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (Belmont, Mass., 1982).

⁵ What the French neo-Nazis have to say about themselves may be gleaned from the writings by Faurisson, Guillaume and Thion that are mentioned in these notes. But there are also three excellent major studies of these people, and I am happy to acknowledge my great debt to the following: 1) Alain Finkielkraut, *L’avenir d’une négation* (Paris: Seuil, 1982); 2) Nadine Fresco, “Les redresseurs de morts,” *Les temps modernes*, no. 407 (June 1980), pp. 2150–211; 3) Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Les assassins de la mémoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1987). As far as I know, only the latter two items have appeared in English translation, but these seem to be of excerpts only. There is a version of Fresco’s piece in *Dissent*, Fall 1981, and of Vidal-Naquet’s book in *Democracy*, April 1981, pp. 67–95. I have not seen these translations and do not know how adequate they may be. There is an excellent article about the American wing of this “revisionist” movement: Lucy S. Dawidowicz, “Lies about the Holocaust,” *Commentary*, vol. 70, no. 6 (December 1980), pp. 31–37. We also have a good report by the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, “Holo-

caust ‘Revisionism’: A Denial of History,” *Facts*, vol. 26, no. 2 (June 1980). Credit for the first treatment of the relationship between Chomsky and the neo-Nazis, written at a time when many of the materials that we have now were still unavailable, must go to W. D. Rubinstein, “Chomsky and the Neo-Nazis,” *Quadrant* (Australia), October 1981, pp. 8–14. A reply by Chomsky and a rebuttal by Rubinstein are published in the April 1982 issue of the same journal.

⁶ *L’Express*, September 4, 1987, pp. 30–31.

⁷ Robert Faurisson, “Revisionism on Trial: Developments in France, 1979–1983,” *Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1985), pp. 133–82. This credal affirmation, comprising sixty words in its original French, is frequently cited and recited verbatim by Faurisson and his followers. For the French version and its ritualistic use, see the pamphlet by Faurisson’s chief follower, Pierre Guillaume, *Droit et histoire* (Paris, La Vieille Taupe, 1986), pp. 18–19, 92.

⁸ Robert Faurisson, “How the British Obtained the Confessions of Rudolf Höss,” *Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 7, no. 4 (1986–87), pp. 389–403.

⁹ Robert Faurisson, *L’affaire Faurisson: Interview de Robert Faurisson à Storia illustrata, août 1979* (n.d.). Introduction by Faurisson, and notice that this text was revised for the purpose of the pamphlet. There is no date, but the appended book list has items dated as late as 1986.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹¹ Fresco, “Les redresseurs de morts.”

¹² Robert Allen, *Voice of Britain: The Inside Story of the Daily Express* (Cambridge: Patrick Stephens, 1983); A. J. P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972).

¹³ Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 387.

¹⁴ There is a picture of this front page in Allen, *Voice of Britain*, p. 66.

¹⁵ I am translating from a French-language two-page leaflet, a catechism, entitled *66 Questions & réponses sur l’holocauste* (Institute for Historical Review, n.d.).

¹⁶ Pierre Guillaume, *Droit et histoire* (Paris: La Vieille Taupe, 1986). The two documents are published together under the title “Une mise au point” (A Clarification) on pp. 152–72.

¹⁷ Serge Thion, *Vérité historique ou vérité politique?* (Paris: La Vieille Taupe, 1980), p. 163.

¹⁸ Chomsky, “His Right to Say It,” *Nation*, February 28, 1981, pp. 231–34; he also takes up the point in his famous Preface to Robert Faurisson, *Mémoire en défense* (Paris: La Vieille Taupe, 1980).

¹⁹ Nadine Fresco’s excellent article, cited in n. 5 above, discusses Faurisson’s ludicrous claims to expertise in this field.

²⁰ Faurisson, “Revisionism on Trial,” pp. 180–81. Because of his “revi-

sionist” propaganda, Weber became an embarrassment to the University of Tulsa, where he was teaching German, and had his tenure terminated by a cash settlement. See L. E. Hill, “A 1985 Trial of an Anti-Semite and Holocaust-Denier in Canada: Ernst Zundel,” ms. in preparation. I am greatly indebted to my colleague Professor Hill for access to a first draft of this important study of the first Zundel trial. Weber, like Faurisson and other “revisionist” luminaries, was a defense witness at this trial and his background became part of the trial record.

- ²¹ As far as I know, this text has never appeared in English, but the content is very similar to Chomsky’s *Nation* article (see n. 18 above). The French text forms the preface to Robert Faurisson, *Mémoire en défense* (Paris: La Vieille Taupe, 1980).
- ²² Guillaume, *Droit et histoire*, p. 163, my translation.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 167–68, my translation.
- ²⁴ Noam Chomsky, *Réponses inédites* (Paris: Spartacus, 1984).
- ²⁵ See Rubinstein, “Chomsky and the Neo-Nazis,” as well as the subsequent letters to the editor (n. 5 above). Chomsky never challenged the authenticity of the document or the information it contained. The same document was published as Robert Faurisson, “Letter to the ‘New Statesman,’” *Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1980), pp. 157–61.
- ²⁶ See, for example, Faurisson, *L’affaire Faurisson*, p. 24; Faurisson, “Revisionism on Trial,” p. 181; Thion, *Vérité historique ou vérité politique?* p. 163.
- ²⁷ Faurisson’s previously cited article on Rudolf Höss (see n. 8) appeared in a French version in the first issue of the *Annales*, but there is a very curious bowdlerization. In the American version, Faurisson accuses the Auschwitz witnesses of being liars because they are Jews, but this French version makes no such claim. Could it be that there are some kinds of anti-Semitism that are too blatant even for Monsieur Guillaume? See Robert Faurisson, “Comment les Britanniques ont obtenu les aveux de Rudolf Höss, commandant d’Auschwitz,” *Annales d’histoire révisionniste*, no. 1 (Spring 1987), pp. 137–52.
- ²⁸ Guillaume, *Droit et histoire*, pp. 9ff.
- ²⁹ “Pour autant que je puisse en juger, Faurisson est une sorte de libéral relativement apolitique.” Chomsky in Faurisson, *Mémoire en défense*, pp. xiv–xv.
- ³⁰ Chomsky, “His Right to Say It,” p. 231; see also Noam Chomsky, *The Chomsky Reader*, ed. James Peck (New York: Pantheon, 1987), p. 294.
- ³¹ Cohn to Chomsky, November 18, 1987. I sent him a copy of Faurisson, “How the British Obtained the Confessions of Rudolf Höss.”
- ³² Rubinstein, “Chomsky and the Neo-Nazis,” p. 12.

- ³³ Cited in Geoffrey Sampson, "Censoring '20th Century Culture': The Case of Noam Chomsky," *New Criterion*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1984), pp. 7–16. Chomsky's vituperative reply, with a rejoinder from Sampson, appeared in the January 1985 issue of the same journal.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ Howard F. Stein, "The Holocaust, and the Myth of the Past as History," *Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 1, no. 4 (Winter 1980), pp. 309–22.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ Howard F. Stein, "L'Holocauste et le mythe du passé comme histoire," *Annales d'Histoire Révisionniste*, no. 2 (Summer 1987), pp. 11–26.
- ³⁸ Noam Chomsky, "All Denials of Free Speech Undercut a Democratic Society," *Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Spring 1986), pp. 123–27.
- ³⁹ Chomsky, "His Right to Say It," p. 231.
- ⁴⁰ Chomsky, *The Chomsky Reader*, p. 294.
- ⁴¹ See Sampson, "Censoring '20th Century Culture': The Case of Noam Chomsky." This passage comes from Chomsky's reply, published in the *New Criterion*, January 1985, pp. 81–84.
- ⁴² Cohn to Chomsky, November 2, 1985.
- ⁴³ See, for example, Chomsky, *Réponses inédites*, p. 41.
- ⁴⁴ *Le Monde*, June 18, 1987. The Bibliothèque nationale in Paris has several editions of Pérès, but I was unable to borrow a copy on this side of the Atlantic. The booklet, *Comme quoi Napoléon n'a jamais existé*, was republished several times until what appears to be its last edition of 1909. But with all that—and perhaps this should be a warning to Faurisson—Pérès is not even a footnote in any of the books on Napoleon that I have been able to consult.
- ⁴⁵ Chomsky, *The Chomsky Reader*, pp. 3–55.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 22–23, 29.
- ⁴⁸ There is a succinct sketch of Council Communism in Roland Biard, *Dictionnaire de l'extrême-gauche de 1945 à nos jours* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1978), pp. 115–19. Among the works available in English are the following: Douglas Kellner, ed., *Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977); Paul Mattick, *Anti-Bolshevik Communism* (White Plains, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1978).
- ⁴⁹ Vidal-Naquet, *Les Assassins de la mémoire*, pp. 155ff; Finkielkraut, *L'avenir d'une négation*, pp. 40ff. There is also a very lengthy but quite interesting insider's description that comes to us from one of the tiny splinters that left VT over Faurisson and other matters: (Anon.), "Le roman de nos origines," *La Banquise* no. 2 (1983), pp. 3–60.
- ⁵⁰ On this group, see the recapitulation by Paul Mattick Jr. (son of one

of the founders of Council Communism), “Socialisme ou barbarie,” in *Biographical Dictionary of Neo-Marxism*, ed. Robert A. Gorman (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985).

⁵¹ Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians* (Boston: South End Press, 1983), pp. 90–91n.

⁵² Chomsky here echoes the position of the Communist International at the time, which, on orders from the Soviet government, gave its support to the Arab rioters in 1929. Many Jewish Communists were outraged and left the party over this issue. See Melech Epstein, *The Jew and Communism* (New York: Trade Union Sponsoring Committee, n.d.), pp. 223ff. It is also of some interest that Albert Einstein, until this point an honorary officer of the Communist-controlled Anti-Imperialist League, resigned in protest over this matter in a letter dated September 6, 1929 (Document 47-458, Einstein Archive, cited by permission of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel).

⁵³ Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, p. 169.

⁵⁴ Y. Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918–1929* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), p. 269.

⁵⁵ Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, pp. 200, 260, 334.

⁵⁶ Christopher Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel* (London: Collins, 1965), p. 136.

⁵⁷ I have relied on the apparently identical British edition, Vincent Sheean, *In Search of History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1935).

⁵⁸ Walid Khalidi, ed., *From Haven to Conquest* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971), p. xxiv.

⁵⁹ Sheean, *In Search of History*, pp. 409–11.

⁶⁰ Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 111–12.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² How the Mufti is treated may well be used as a quick test of veracity for any book that professes to discuss Arab-Jewish relations. (Another test is the treatment of Deir Yassin; see my text below.) Here is a report on some of the books that Chomsky cites as his sources: Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel*, mentions the pro-German activities of the Mufti very briefly, but he tells the reader what he needs to know. Porath’s *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918–1929* deals only with the period to 1929, but the reader is fully informed about the Mufti’s anti-Jewish activities until then and his share in responsibility for the 1929 violence (see p. 270 and *passim*). Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*—though often cited by Arabs because of his extreme views on certain issues—gives the essential facts as well. Lenni Brenner, a self-professed Jewish anti-Zionist with Trotskyist views, acknowledges the

facts but blames the Zionists: "The Mufti was an incompetent reactionary who was driven into his anti-Semitism by the Zionists"; in *Zionism in the Age of Dictators* (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill, 1983), p. 102. (Brenner and his work are described in Walter Laqueur, "The Anti-Semitism of Fools," *New Republic*, November 2, 1987, pp. 33–39.) The suppression of fact begins with Khalidi, ed., *From Haven to Conquest*, which, as we have seen, makes no pretense at impartial scholarship. It mentions the Mufti as a prewar leader of Arabs, without giving any hint of the anti-Semitism or the Nazi connections; but at least he still exists. For the Mufti's complete excision from history we have to wait until we come to the work of Noam Chomsky himself. Perhaps it is apt that Chomsky published his book just one year shy of Nineteen Eighty-Four.

⁶³ Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, pp. 94–98.

⁶⁴ See the appropriate articles as listed in the index to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, and the very helpful *Myths and Facts*, issued every three years by *Near East Report*.

⁶⁵ Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel*, p. 416.

⁶⁶ Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, p. 449.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 467.

⁶⁸ Norman Epstein, "Chomsky, Israel and Nuclear War," *Canadian Jewish Outlook*, vol. 21, no. 9 (October 1983), pp. 17–18.

PART III

CHOMSKY AND
THE WAR ON TERROR

SIX

CHOMSKY AND 9/11

David Horowitz and Ronald Radosh

On October 18, eleven days after U.S. military forces began America's response to the September 11 attacks, Noam Chomsky explained the unfolding events to an audience of two thousand followers who were gathered for an MIT lecture series. His speech was called "The New War against Terror" and was soon posted on the Internet, broadcast on C-SPAN and published as a new Chomsky broadside. Weeks later, as the fighting in Afghanistan reached its highest pitch, Chomsky appeared in Islamabad to share his views with the Muslim population of Pakistan, that nuclear-armed and none-too-stable ally in operations against the Taliban.

The MIT speech, delivered little more than a month after the original attacks, provides a clear picture of Chomsky's analytic process, his use of evidence, and the way in which the war crystallized the agendas of his lifelong crusade against his country. Chomsky proposes to deal with five questions, the first of which, he observes, far outweighs all the others: "One question, and by far the most important one, is what is happening right now? Implicit in that is what can we do about it?" In reviewing Chomsky's answer to this and other questions, we will follow the text as it appears on the www.zmag.org website, preserving his own section headings and numbering.

1. “*What’s Happening Right Now? Starvation of 3 to 4 million people.*”

Well, let’s start with right now. I’ll talk about the situation in Afghanistan. I’ll just keep to uncontroversial sources like the *New York Times* [crowd laughter]. According to the *New York Times* there are 7–8 million people in Afghanistan on the verge of starvation. That was true actually before September 11th. They were surviving on international aid. On September 16th, the *Times* reported, I’m quoting, that the United States demanded from Pakistan the elimination of truck convoys that provide much of the food and other supplies to Afghanistan’s civilian population. As far as I could determine there was no reaction in the United States or for that matter in Europe.

In short, according to Chomsky the United States had already begun, in a calculated way, to starve millions of defenseless civilians in Afghanistan. Moreover, no one in the West cared. This is what—according to Chomsky—was “happening now.” It is what should provide us—again according to Chomsky—with an accurate moral standard for assessing these misrepresented events.

In order that nobody should fail to appreciate the gravity of his point, Chomsky spells it out again in the very next paragraph:

Looks like what’s happening is some sort of silent genocide. It also gives a good deal of insight into the elite culture, the culture we are part of. It indicates that...what will happen we don’t know, but plans are being made and programs implemented on the assumption that they may lead to the death of several million people in the next few months very casually with no comment, no particular thought about it, that’s just kind of normal, here and in a good part of Europe.

The style is classic Chomsky. *Looks like what’s happening is some sort of silent genocide.* The casual tone and the faux professorial caution in formulating the claim are meant to disarm his listeners as they absorb the charge—which is actually quite lurid and also quite lunatic, since it is at odds with everything we know about the way America generally behaves in the real world (as opposed to Chomsky’s fevered imaginings) and the particular way the American government was behaving as of October 18 in

response to the unprovoked al-Qaeda attacks: No Muslim roundups; no firing squads; no missile sprays at civilian populations in South Asia. But this is all deceptive surface to Chomsky, for in his mind the calculated intention to starve millions of innocent Afghans is actually “just kind of normal” for Americans.

Chomsky’s answer to the question “what is happening now?” thus leads to a conclusion characteristic of his analyses of his country in action: We are moral monsters, who coolly plan the murder of not merely thousands of innocents as did the desperate crew who brought down the World Trade Center, but millions. The American government *intentionally* laid plans “on the assumption that they may lead to the death of several million people in the next few months very casually with no comment, no particular thought about it.... The country was on a life-line and we just cut the line.”

Of course, in reality no such thing transpired. Not 10 percent of Chomsky’s 3 to 4 million starved; not 1 percent; not one hundredth of 1 percent. His statements can only be described as calculated lies. Readers unused to such blatant professorial mendacity might be tempted to give Chomsky the benefit of the doubt and conclude that he could not possibly have meant what he said. Surely he didn’t mean to place American democracy on a par with the genocidal regimes of Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot and other apostles of the mass annihilation of innocents. But such a generous assumption would be wrong, and Chomsky is the first to let them know it. “All right,” he continues the MIT discourse, “let’s turn to the slightly more abstract question, forgetting for the moment that we are in the midst of apparently trying to murder 3 or 4 million people, not Taliban, of course, their victims.” Passing off the fantastic indictment in a subordinate clause is a characteristic Chomsky rhetorical trick to make the incredible seem like a possible truth.

But consider the import of this monstrous lie: Islamic fanatics want to bomb us because we are mass murderers—people who don’t even notice their own crimes. No wonder al-Qaeda resorts to “terror”—a word that, as Chomsky explains, is really a cynical verbal choice of the true practitioners of terror in this world: us. In fact, the enemy’s aggressive “terror” is more prop-

erly understood as a powerless victim's revenge. Thus is the moral universe of 9/11 turned upside down.

Chomsky weaves his malicious fantasies with the skill of Thomas Mann's Mario the Magician, a famous fascist prototype whose audience, spellbound by his illusions, can no longer distinguish truth from falsehood, evil from good. Chomsky's own hypnotic power derives from the impression that his bizarre text is based on actual sources like the *New York Times*, and that the reality he is busily inventing can be decoded only by intellectual wizards like himself.

Chomsky detected the plot by Washington *deliberately* to starve 3 to 4 million innocent Afghan civilians by reading between the lines of a *New York Times* news item. As he said, "On September 16th, the *Times* reported, I'm quoting, that the United States demanded from Pakistan the elimination of truck convoys that provide much of the food and other supplies to Afghanistan's civilian population."

But a month later, on October 16—two days before Chomsky's speech—another article appeared in the *Times*, written by Elisabeth Boiler and Elizabeth Becker, that began: "President Bush promoted his relief fund for Afghan children at the headquarters of the American Red Cross today...." In other words, the Bush administration was working to *prevent* the starvation of Afghan civilians at the very moment Noam Chomsky was claiming that it had begun a silent genocide. "The Pentagon and the British Defense Ministry," the October 16 article reported, "have agreed to coordinate the air strikes so they will not hit relief convoys...." Evidently, the United States did not cut the food line but in fact took pains, in the midst of a war, to avoid doing so, and the truck convoys continued.

For Chomsky to reach his conclusions, he first had to deny the American governmental relief efforts that were actually taking place and of which he was aware. He managed this by exaggerating every concern expressed by private relief agencies—some of which, like Oxfam, have a history of hostility to U.S. foreign policy—and then converting their anxieties about the future into irrefutable statements of fact. Chomsky also ignored all the reports of the Taliban's role in the immediate food

crisis. As the October 16 *Times* story notes, the Taliban, in order to supply their own military forces, were stealing food from the very convoys that Chomsky refers to:

The Taliban have also begun levying a tax of \$8 to \$37 a ton on wheat coming into the country. "One convoy of 1,000 tons of wheat was held up for five days trying to negotiate the tax," Mark Carolina of the International Rescue Committee said. Since air strikes began, several warehouses have been looted and local staff members have been beaten.

The war conditions in Afghanistan that militated against the delivery of food were the result of the terrorist aggression supported by the Taliban regime, not the actions of the United States. No sane person would think of blaming Churchill and FDR, rather than Hitler, for the harsh conditions in Germany during World War II.

On November 16—barely four weeks after Chomsky's MIT talk—an article entitled "Now, the Battle to Feed the Afghan Nation" appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*. Journalist Tim Weiner reported that the American military was using its full resources to "deliver relief for millions of hungry, cold, sick, war-weary Afghans." Moreover, "NATO allies," acting as a "full partner" to relief agencies, would "ship food, clothing, shelter and medicine to the nations surrounding Afghanistan for United Nations relief organizations, private aid groups and intrepid Afghan truckers to deliver to people in ruined cities and shattered villages."

In other words, the facts tell a story that exactly contradicts Chomsky's scare claims. The U.S.-led military action in fact led to the *restoration* of food relief and lessened the danger of the mass starvation that might have followed under Taliban rule; thus it may have *saved* millions of Afghan lives. While the aid effort was international, the United States alone was "paying for much of the goods that the coalition is moving into Afghanistan." And as Mark Bartolini, vice president of the International Rescue Committee, told the *Times*, "had this war not occurred, we wouldn't have had the access we have now—the best access in the past decade."

The Bush administration had in fact provided \$320 million in food aid, which “resolved for the moment” the question of food supplies getting to the people. The *Times* story was reinforced the following day by an article in the online magazine *Salon.com*, by Laura Rozen: “Aid experts say that the agencies’ repeated alarms about the impact of the U.S. military campaign against the Taliban have ignored the fact that more food has been reaching Afghanistan since the U.S. bombing began than was before—a lot more.” Rozen quotes John Fawcett, a humanitarian relief worker, who stated unequivocally, “more aid has gone into Afghanistan in the past month than in the past year. The aid agencies cried wolf. They said the bombing will stop us from delivering humanitarian aid. It will create 1.5 million refugees. Well, in fact, the result of the bombing is there are 150,000 new refugees—one-tenth of what they expected, and there’s been a tenfold increase of humanitarian aid getting in.”

Rozen suggested a possible reason for the exaggerated concerns of the aid groups: “It’s hard not to think that some aid groups’ opposition to the bombing stemmed more from a fundamental reluctance among humanitarian groups to endorse a campaign of violence.” It is certainly true that the chaos of war affected the flow of aid—in the last weeks of November, when the war was at its height, there was a temporary falling off in aid shipments (which were still twice the pre-9/11 levels). But given the war conditions, the Bush administration, as one would expect, was doing what was humanly possible to provide aid to the Afghan people. So much for Chomsky’s “silent genocide.”

America’s defeat of the Taliban greatly enhanced the future prospects for the Afghan people. As John Norris, a senior adviser to the International Crisis Group, put it to Rozen, “the retreat of the Taliban from key positions could make way to...a significant increase in aid deliveries and distribution” of food and other materials. “The spigots for aid are going to be open in Afghanistan now like never before,” Norris added. “...This military action is humanitarian action. Do you want to deliver food packets to the concentration camp, or do you want to get rid of the concentration camp?”

On November 30, the *New York Times* had reported that the

absence of a bridge between northern Afghanistan and Uzbekistan cut off “the most promising avenue for shipping in supplies.” Once again, however, the United States acted to correct the situation. A week later, on December 8, Agence France-Presse reported that Colin Powell had flown to Uzbekistan “with a diplomatic triumph under his belt after persuading the reluctant authorities to open a key bridge linking the central Asian country to Afghanistan.” The bridge, which opened a few days later, was described as “a vital gateway for getting badly-needed humanitarian aid supplies into northern Afghanistan.” In other words, U.S. policy had once again resulted in a greater availability of food supplies. The bridge had been closed “for four years since the Taliban took control of north-east Afghanistan,” and the government of Uzbekistan feared Taliban fighters coming into their country if it was reopened. America’s military defeat of the Taliban changed the equation. It was estimated that opening the bridge would supply “40 percent of the humanitarian needs of the Afghan people.”

Chomsky’s original indictment had two counts—the alleged genocide and the silence that supposedly accompanied it: “Plans are being made and programs implemented on the assumption that they may lead to the death of several million people in the next few months very casually with no comment, no particular thought about it.” The first count—as we have easily established—is false, and obviously so. The second originates in a thesis familiar to readers of Chomsky’s book *Manufacturing Consent*, a vulgar Marxist tract which argues that the American media function as a propaganda machine for the government and its ruling-class bosses. In his MIT address, Chomsky asserted that

the Special Rapporteur of the UN in charge of food pleaded with the United States to stop the bombing to try to save millions of victims. As far as I’m aware that was unreported. [Chomsky did not reveal how he knew this if it was unreported.] That was Monday. Yesterday the major aid agencies OXFAM and Christian Aid and others joined in that plea. You can’t find a report in the *New York Times*. There was a line in the *Boston Globe*, hidden in a story about another topic, Kashmir.

In fact, the story in the *Boston Globe* was headlined “Fighting Terror Tensions in South Asia”—a region that includes Afghanistan—and there were three full paragraphs on the pleadings of the aid groups to stop the bombing. Moreover, as the citations above reveal, the story received attention in other sources, including the *Times* story of October 16. It was also reported on the nightly television network newscasts. It is reasonable to presume that the reason the story failed to get even wider coverage was that it had no basis in fact, but only in the exaggerated fears of the aid groups, which responsible reporters would check. Put another way, the reason the genocide of Afghans was not a big news feature was that it was not news at all; it was just a figment of Noam Chomsky’s malignant imagination. Since there was no planned genocide, there was also no silence about it. Chomsky built his case—as is his practice—on a tissue of distortions that amounted to lies. It is from the cumulative effect of these lies that his cultic power derives.

An illuminating footnote to this story was provided two years later in a question-and-answer feature published by *The Independent*, a left-wing English paper, on December 4, 2003. The feature became notorious because of Chomsky’s remark that anti-Semitism in the West “scarcely exists now,” but the particular comment of interest to Chomsky’s position on the war in Afghanistan is contained in the following exchange with an *Independent* reader:

Q: Where is the “silent genocide” you predicted would happen in Afghanistan if the US intervened there in 2001?

Chomsky: That is an interesting fabrication, which gives a good deal of insight into the prevailing moral and intellectual culture. First, the facts: I predicted nothing. Rather, I reported the grim warnings from virtually every knowledgeable source that the attack might lead to an awesome humanitarian catastrophe, and the bland announcements in the press that Washington had ordered Pakistan to eliminate “truck convoys that provide much of the food and other supplies to Afghanistan’s civilian population.”

All of this is precisely accurate and entirely appropriate. The warnings remain accurate as well, a truism that should be unnecessary to explain. Unfortunately, it is apparently necessary to add

a moral truism: actions are evaluated in terms of the range of anticipated consequences.*

In fact, the warnings were of an existing famine (not one the United States was planning); it was the Taliban that was attacking the truck convoys while the United States took steps to provide the food that the Taliban was confiscating; and what Chomsky said was, “Looks like what’s happening is some sort of silent genocide.”

2. “*Why Was It a Historic Event?*”

Chomsky’s answer to his second question regarding the September 11 attack is that America, which for centuries has been attacking the world—especially the Third World—is now itself under attack, and that is something for progressives to celebrate.

The change was the direction in which the guns were pointed. That’s new. Radically new. So take U.S. history.... During these 200 years, we, the United States expelled or mostly exterminated the indigenous population, that’s many millions of people, conquered half of Mexico, carried out depredations all over the region, the Caribbean and Central America.... But it was always killing someone else, the fighting was somewhere else, it was others who were getting slaughtered. Not here. Not the national territory.

Leaving aside the malicious distortions of the American past, the Chomsky thesis comes to this: The attack on America is long overdue and is historically just. Chomsky seems to believe that America and Europe are still living in the age of colonial expansion—a rhetorical assumption that allows him to ignore the fact that America and its allies do not want to acquire Afghanistan or any other Third World country, and are even reluctant to be involved to the extent that they should be. (Their benign neglect of Afghanistan after the collapse of the Soviet invasion is often cited as a factor in the creation of the Taliban and the al-Qaeda network). Chomsky also ignores the mass

*“You Ask the Questions,” *The Independent*, December 4, 2003, <http://news.independent.co.uk/people/profiles/story.jsp?story=469811>.

slaughter and savage tribal wars conducted by indigenous peoples in today's postcolonial world. In his calculus, America and Europe will always come up negative values. (Thus, he even denounced the efforts of the NATO allies to rescue impoverished Muslims facing systematic extermination and expulsion by Serbian ethnic cleansers as an example of "NATO imperialism.") So much for Chomsky's concern for the oppressed.

3. "What Is Terrorism?"

Chomsky tells us that his third question—"What is the war against terrorism?"—has a corollary: "What is terrorism?" This is a rhetorical trick that allows him to answer the first question by asserting that the war against terrorism is *the real terrorism*.

In Chomsky's view, America's war against the Taliban is not only a terrorist war itself, but also the only terrorism one can accurately speak of. America's war in Afghanistan is "a plague, a cancer which is spread by barbarians, by 'depraved opponents of civilization.'" This is how Chomsky perceives his own country and the democracies of the West. The definition of terrorism as "a cancer spread by depraved opponents of civilization" comes—we'll have to take Chomsky's word for this—from a presidential declaration at the beginning of the Reagan administration to the effect that (in Chomsky's paraphrase) "the war against international terrorism would be the core of our foreign policy." As Chomsky interprets this policy, "The Reagan administration responded [to the perceived terrorist threat] by creating an extraordinary international terrorist network, totally unprecedented in scale, which carried out massive atrocities all over the world...."

These are bizarre claims, but Chomsky is content to rest them on a single substantiating case: "I'll just mention one case which is totally uncontroversial, so we might as well not argue about it, by no means the most extreme but uncontroversial...at least among people who have some minimal concern for international law, human rights, justice and other things like that." The case referred to is what Chomsky calls "the Reagan-US war against Nicaragua which left tens of thousands of people dead,

the country ruined, perhaps beyond recovery.” In Chomsky’s view, the United States launched an unprovoked war of terror against Nicaragua in the 1980s, using a “mercenary army” (viz., the *contras*). When the Nicaraguan government lodged a complaint with the World Court about the American support for the *contras*, the U.S. government rejected the court’s jurisdiction and thus—in Chomsky’s telling—the rule of international law itself.

Chomsky provides no sources for these claims because there are none. There is no truly international court, nor is there an international rule of law, since there is no international authority to enforce it. There is only the rule of a law that sovereign states consent to when it is convenient for them. Moreover, there was no U.S. war against Nicaragua, let alone a terrorist war. The United States provided assistance to a peasant army resisting a Nicaraguan dictatorship that was supported politically, economically and militarily by the Soviet empire. The Sandinista dictators had usurped their power from a democratic coalition, stripped Nicaragua’s citizens of their political rights and—at the time of the conflict—were ruling by force. It was the Sandinistas who destroyed the Nicaraguan economy and provoked the *contra* peasant revolt by pursuing Soviet-style collectivization, confiscating small peasant holdings and converting them into socialist collective farms.

When the pressure of this peasant revolt and U.S. efforts forced the dictatorship to hold a free election on February 25, 1990, the Nicaraguan people immediately voted the Sandinistas out of power by an overwhelming margin of 55 to 41 percent. The democracy that was created, along with free elections, continues to this day; and the Sandinista party is still rejected. The exit of the Sandinista leadership revealed that they were the ones who truly deserved the term “mercenaries,” i.e., political thugs whose self-interest came before all else. Before surrendering power, in what their countrymen called the “*piñata*,” the Sandinista ex-rulers fleeced their country of its remaining wealth, transferred government funds to hidden Swiss bank accounts, and appropriated hotels, industries and restaurants—to go with the mansions they were already living in—as their personal properties.

Chomsky knows these facts but ignores them. On the other

hand, several former members of the Sandinista dictatorship have themselves conceded the lies they propagated while they were in power—lies that Chomsky still repeats. In 1999, Sergio Ramirez, who had been vice president of the Sandinista regime, wrote:

Let the record show that many landless peasants joined the *contras* or—resolved not to be corralled into [agricultural cooperatives]—became the *contras*' social base of support.... The ranks of the *contras* kept on growing, and by then its field commanders tended to be small farmers, many of them without any ties to Somocismo; indeed, in many cases they supplanted the former National Guard officers who had been the movement's original leaders.

Ramirez' belated honesty was endorsed by the former Sandinista *comandante* and minister of agriculture, Jaime Wheelock, as well as by Alejandro Bendana, the Sandinistas' top diplomatic spokesman, who admitted in his memoir (*A Peasant Tragedy: Testimonies of the Resistance*) that the “*contra* army grew beyond...expectations not as a result of sophisticated recruitment campaigns in the countryside but mainly because of the impact on the small-holding peasant of the policies, limits and mistakes of the Sandinistas.”

This reality is ignored in Chomsky's misrepresentation of the conflict as being between Nicaragua and the United States, with the United States as the terrorist and the “Nicaraguans” helpless victims. To establish his deception, Chomsky makes a tendentious mountain out of the molehill of the Sandinista dictatorship's complaint to the World Court and the court's adverse ruling against the United States. “The World Court accepted [Nicaragua's] case, ruled in their favor...condemned what they called the ‘unlawful use of force,’ which is another word for international terrorism by the United States.” Well, outside the Chomsky cult, of course, unlawful use of force is not another word for terrorism.

In describing the World Court case, Chomsky ignores the Cold War context of the events—the projection of Soviet power into the Western hemisphere and into Nicaragua in particular. Long before they seized power, the Sandinista dictators were

trained as revolutionaries in Moscow and Havana. The Soviet goal in supporting them, according to political scientist Alvin Z. Rubinstein, was to create a Communist nation with the single largest military in the region.* The fact that the Sandinistas were supporting and supplying Communist guerrilla wars in El Salvador and Guatemala at the time of these events was a key factor in determining U.S. policies.

Chomsky also closes his eyes to the fact that the World Court is a creature of national governments, and consequently lacks any authority unless both parties to a dispute agree to give it authority. Jeane Kirkpatrick, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations at the time Nicaragua submitted its case, dismissed the court as a “semi-legal, semi-juridical, semi-political body which nations sometimes accept and sometimes don’t.” Even the court itself recognizes this reality, and its own statutes expressly permit states to withdraw from its jurisdiction.

At the time of the Sandinista suit, the World Court had no jurisdiction over any of the Soviet bloc police states, although these same regimes—in which the rule of law was entirely absent—provided judges for the court. Soviet foreign policy was then operating under the Brezhnev doctrine, which asserted a right to use force to keep a nation in the Communist orbit. Yet the Soviet bloc states regularly condemned America’s defensive responses to Soviet expansion as “aggression.” If the United States acquiesced in World Court decisions, it would be bound by them and hence incapable of responding to hostile Soviet bloc actions.

In the Nicaragua case, as one of the dissenting judges on the World Court (from Japan) remarked,

Nicaragua has not come to court with clean hands. On the contrary, as an aggressor, indirectly responsible—but ultimately responsible—for large numbers of deaths and widespread destruction in El Salvador, apparently much exceeding that which Nicaragua has sustained, Nicaragua’s hands are odiously unclean. Nicaragua has compounded its sins by misrepresenting them in court.

**Moscow’s Third World Strategy* (Princeton University Press, 1988).

The practical issue was whether the United States would surrender its own national interest to a court composed of members who were not only hostile to American interests, but to the rule of law itself (among the latter: China, Poland and Nigeria). The United States simply refused to accept the jurisdiction of a court composed of rival national interests.

By ignoring these realities, Chomsky is able to present the decision of a politicized and largely irrelevant institution as representing “the judgments of the highest international authorities”—and thus America as an outlaw state and, in Chomsky’s loopy intellectual framework, a “terrorist” one as well. Therefore, the American-supported *contra* rebellion, which actually restored democracy to Nicaragua, becomes the “first terrorist war.” On the other hand, actual terrorists like the al-Qaeda network are really freedom fighters resisting a Nazi-like oppression.

Terror is misunderstood, Chomsky informs us, as a “weapon of the weak,” when those who are called “terrorists” are really freedom fighters resisting the aggressions of the strong. As the case of Nicaragua illustrates, “terror is a weapon of the strong” and, in particular, the weapon that imperialists use to suppress people who resist them. Expanding on this “analysis,” Chomsky invokes his favorite image when discussing American evil. Characteristically, he also attempts to disguise the central role this image plays in his worldview by making it seem to occur to him as a casual afterthought rather than what it is, an expression of his core beliefs:

It is [regarded] as a weapon of the weak because the strong also control the doctrinal systems and their terror doesn’t count as terror. Now, that’s close to universal. I can’t think of a historical exception. Even the worst mass murderers view the world that way. So pick the Nazis. They weren’t carrying out terror in occupied Europe. They were protecting the local populations from the terrorism of the partisans. And like other resistance movements, there was terrorism. The Nazis were carrying out counter-terror. Furthermore, the United States essentially agreed with that.

So pick the Nazis. As though Noam Chomsky would pick anyone else. He continues:

After the war, the U.S. army did extensive studies of Nazi counter-terror operations in Europe. First I should say the U.S. picked them up and began carrying them out itself, often against the same targets, the former resistance. But the military also studied the Nazi methods, published interesting studies.... Those methods, with the advice of *Wehrmacht* officers who were brought over here became the manuals of counter-insurgency, of counter-terror, of low intensity conflict...and are the procedures that are being used. So it's not just that the Nazis did it. It's that it was regarded as the right thing to do by the leaders of Western civilization, that is us, who then proceeded to do it themselves.

In other words, in America's war against Nicaragua—and more importantly, against the al-Qaeda terrorists in Afghanistan who attacked us—we are the Nazis. No evidence is adduced to support these perverse claims (we, of course, defeated the Nazis), but no matter. In the compassion cells of the Chomsky cult where the Big Lie is a binding covenant, the libel in itself is sufficient.

Through slippery allusions, inverted logic, rambling evasions of facts from their context and malicious distortions of the historical record, Chomsky pounds his message relentlessly home: "There was a terrorist force in South Africa. It was called the African National Congress. They were a terrorist force officially. South Africa in contrast was an ally and we certainly couldn't support actions by a terrorist group struggling against a racist regime. That would be impossible." But in fact, the United States opposed racial apartheid, imposed economic sanctions against the South African regime, helped to force its surrender of power to the ANC, and fostered a peaceful and democratic transition of South Africa into a multiracial, democratic state.

Not content with distorting events, Chomsky also distorts abstractions from events as in his attempt to formulate a Chomsky Law of Historical Development:

Nicaragua has now become the 2nd poorest country in the hemisphere. What's the poorest country? Well that's of course Haiti, which also happens to be the victim of most U.S. intervention in the 20th century by a long shot.... Nicaragua is second ranked in degree of U.S. intervention in the 20th century. It is the 2nd poor-

est. Actually, it is vying with Guatemala. They interchange every year or two as to who's the second poorest. And they also vie as to who is the leading target of U.S. military intervention. We're supposed to think that all of this is some sort of accident. That it has nothing to do with anything that happened in history. Maybe.

One extremely poor country that Chomsky consistently omits from his list is Cuba, where a U.S. intervention in 1961 failed to overthrow the socialist dictatorship that Fidel Castro had installed. This turned out to be bad for the Cuban people. At the time of the Cuban Revolution, Cuba ranked fifth in per capita income in Latin America—ahead of Mexico—and fourth in literacy. Forty years later, thanks to Castro's rule, Cuba is one of the four poorest countries in the hemisphere. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Cuba actually ranks last—along with Haiti—in per capita daily calorie consumption. The average annual consumption of rice—a staple of the Cuban diet, especially for the poor—was 53.5 kilograms per capita in 1956, but dropped to only 36.8 kilograms in 1997. In other words, as a result of Castro's socialist economic policies, enforced by a ruthless police state, Cuba is an island prison that is worse off economically than it was under the Batista regime.

By way of contrast, thirty years ago the United States helped to overthrow a pro-Castro Marxist government, headed by Salvador Allende, in Chile. Allende wanted to install a regime modeled on Castro's Communist gulag. After his opponents staged a successful coup (supported by the United States), the new dictator, Augustin Pinochet, introduced free market policies and eventually (if reluctantly) transformed Chile into a multiparty democracy. Since 1975, Chile has shown the most sustained and highest rate of economic growth of any Latin American nation and is a free country run by "democratic socialists." The Chomsky law of U.S. intervention evidently cuts both ways.

4. "What Are the Origins of the September 11 Crime?"

In formulating his fourth question, Chomsky rejects the description of al-Qaeda terrorism—the blowing up of two embassies,

the attack on the warship *Cole*, the bombing of two 100-story office buildings and the attack on the headquarters of the U.S. military in Washington—as acts of war. In Chomsky's view, they are merely the crimes of individual protesters at the end of their tethers. This allows him to treat the deeds themselves as aberrations and, of course, as expressions of the cry for social justice—desperate acts of resistance to American oppression.

Chomsky accomplishes this illusion with typical casuistry:

We have to make a distinction between two categories which shouldn't be run together. One is the actual agents of the crime; the other is a reservoir of at least sympathy, sometimes support that they appeal to even among people who very much oppose the criminals and the actions. And those are two different things.

Are they? This distinction represents a kind of refurbished Trotskyism: Stalin was a criminal but Communism was just fine. So-called terrorists—the Palestinians, for example—commit horrible crimes against women and children, but since they are struggling against a “military occupation,” they are to be excused. They are “resistance” fighters, a term Chomsky casually applies to Hezbollah, one of the most bloodthirsty terrorist groups in the Middle East.

Chomsky even makes a tortuous effort to get Osama bin Laden off the hook. Ignoring the mountain of facts linking bin Laden to the attacks, he asserts that there is “no evidence” for his role or that of his al-Qaeda network. In Chomskyland, even if the terrorists are guilty, it is the United States—the true terrorist entity—that ultimately is to blame. According to Chomsky, America is responsible for the attack itself because its government supported the Afghan resistance to the 1979 Soviet invasion, and it was from these circumstances—with assistance from the CIA—that al-Qaeda grew.

It is true, of course, that the United States opposed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and thus supported many *muja-heddin* groups, among them individuals who later joined al-Qaeda. But the United States merely armed them for one battle; it did not shape their intentions for others. American assistance made possible the defeat of a brutal invader who had

killed a million Afghan civilians by deliberately bombing their cities. Support for the *mujaheddin* was a “price worth paying,” in the words of foreign policy expert Robert Kaplan, “because it led to the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the liberation of Eastern Europe. To say that supporting the Afghans against the Soviets was not worth it is like saying fighting World War II was not worth it because it led to a forty-four year Cold War.”

To preempt even this objection, Chomsky insinuates that America is to blame not only for providing weapons to the *mujaheddin* resistance, but for the Soviet invasion itself. He does this by alluding, without actually citing a specific text, to a comment he attributes to Jimmy Carter’s national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski. According to Chomsky, Brzezinski once remarked that the United States had armed the Afghan resistance in order to draw the Soviets into a trap. In other words, there is no evil connected with September 11 for which the United States is not responsible.

Chomsky then asks a question that for him and his acolytes is actually superfluous: “Why did [the terrorists] turn against the United States?” Observe the answer: “Well that had to do with what they call the U.S. invasion of Saudi Arabia. In 1990, the U.S. established permanent military bases in Saudi Arabia, which from their point of view is comparable to a Russian invasion of Afghanistan, except that Saudi Arabia is way more important. That’s the home of the holiest sites of Islam.”

Does Chomsky himself endorse this nonsense? He purposely does not provide a clue. In reality there is no comparison between the “U.S. invasion of Saudi Arabia” and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, because there *was* no U.S. invasion of Saudi Arabia. The Saudis themselves invited the United States onto their territory to protect them from the armies of Saddam Hussein, which had just swallowed the defenseless state of Kuwait. The U.S. bases there were only as permanent as the Iraqi threat and the wish of the Saudi rulers to keep them.

In short, while Chomsky doesn’t endorse, in so many words, Osama bin Laden’s libels against the United States, he doesn’t disavow them either. Instead, he tries to manipulate his audiences into drawing the conclusion that al-Qaeda was merely responding to American provocation.

What about category two in Chomsky's distinction—the “reservoir of at least sympathy, sometimes support” for al-Qaeda and its terrorist attacks on the United States? The answer: “They are very angry at the United States because of its support of authoritarian and brutal regimes; its intervention to block any move towards democracy; its intervention to stop economic development; its policies of devastating the civilian societies of Iraq while strengthening Saddam Hussein.” In addition to the brazen libels in this catalogue (which are Chomsky's own inventions)—that the United States intervenes in Arab countries to stop economic development and to block any move towards democracy (instances? dates?), and that its war against Saddam Hussein was actually designed to strengthen his rule—the main point is incomprehensible. If the anti-American anger of Islamic radicals is inspired by the authoritarian and brutal regimes of the Muslim world, why is the terror not directed against those regimes? Why did Islamic radicals support the Taliban—the most brutal, despotic and economically backward regime of all? Chomsky has no answer, because he is not arguing in good faith to begin with. His passion is not democracy or economic development; it is hatred for the United States.

5. “*What Are the Policy Options?*”

We now come to Chomsky's final question: What is to be done? His answer is simple: Since *we* are the terrorists, the obvious solution is for us to stop being terrorists. Then we will not be bombed. “We certainly want to reduce the level of terror, certainly not escalate it. There is one easy way to do that and therefore it is never discussed. Namely to stop participating in it.”

Noam Chomsky, of course, realizes that America will not cease being America in the foreseeable future. So, shortly after delivering his MIT remarks, and as the war in Afghanistan approached its climactic battles, he went off on a two-week tour of the Indian subcontinent, adjacent to the war zone, and in particular to Islamabad—the capital city of Pakistan, a Muslim country and a nuclear power that was also the most dangerously volatile state in America's coalition to defeat the Taliban, and one

that could easily tip the other way. The purpose of Chomsky's tour was to pursue what he thought was the best remedy: giving aid and comfort to America's terrorist enemies in the hope that they will win the war against us. On his tour, Chomsky repeated his lies about America's intentions to starve Afghan civilians and carry out a "silent genocide." (This was reported in the Indian press and also to Iranian Muslims in the *Teheran Times* of November 6.) To tens of thousands—and perhaps eventually, through the dissemination of his remarks, to millions—of Muslims and Hindus, Chomsky denounced America as the "world's biggest terrorist state" and the war in Afghanistan as a "worse kind of terrorism" than that perpetrated recently against the United States. This was obviously intended as an incitement to Indians, Pakistanis, Iranians and whoever else was listening to hate America even more. To turn the guns around—clearly this is the solution of which Noam Chomsky dreams.

SEVEN

NOAM CHOMSKY'S ANTI-AMERICAN OBSESSION

David Horowitz

There are those who wonder how it is possible that many of the most privileged and educated of America's youthful elites should come to despise their own nation—a free, open, democratic society—and to do so with such ferocious passion. They ask how it is possible for American youth even to consider lending comfort and aid to the world's Osama bin Ladens and Saddam Husseins (or the Communists before them). A full answer would involve a search of the deep structures of the human psyche and its irrepressible longings for a redemptive illusion. But the short answer is to be found in the speeches and writings of an embittered academic and his political groupies.

For forty years, Noam Chomsky has turned out book after book, pamphlet after pamphlet, speech after speech with one primary message: America is the fount of evil in the modern world. In Chomsky's Manichean universe, America is the Evil Principle, responsible not only for its own crimes, but for the crimes of others as well—including those of the terrorists who struck the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. This is the Chomsky key to the mystery of September 11: *The devil made them do it*. Thus the root causes of the attack on America were America's own crimes, and whatever atrocity has been committed against her, she has committed worse against others.

Chomsky speaks not for the injured and the dead, not for those who searched grimly or desperately through the ruins of lower Manhattan, but rather for all those who gloated over the destruction, those who regard America as the Great Satan. For Chomsky, no injustices, however great, can exceed those of his own country. The very title of his latest book, *Hegemony or Survival*, proposes that America—the Hegemon in question—is a threat to the survival of the world.¹

In his first statement about Osama bin Laden's calculated attacks on office buildings containing thousands of innocent human beings, Chomsky's response was to trump it with an even greater crime that the victim itself had committed. This is how Chomsky's notorious (and characteristically elliptical) September 12 statement "On the Bombings" began:

The terrorist attacks were major atrocities. In scale they may not reach the level of many others, for example, Clinton's bombing of the Sudan with no credible pretext, destroying half its pharmaceutical supplies and killing unknown numbers of people (no one knows, because the U.S. blocked an inquiry at the UN and no one cares to pursue it).²

Observe the syntax: The opening reference to the actual attacks is clipped and bloodless, a kind of rhetorical throat clearing for Chomsky to get out of the way so he can announce the real subject of his concern: America's evil. The accusation against Clinton is slipped into the text, weasel fashion, as though it were a modifier, when it is actually the substantive theme itself. It's a message that says to Americans: *Stop whining at the injury that has been done to you. What else could you expect? Look at the horrors you have done to them.* Here Chomsky exhibits his gift to the Left, which is to make the victim seem an even more heinous perpetrator than the criminal.

In point of fact—and just for the record—Bill Clinton's decision to launch a missile into Sudan, however ill conceived, was not remotely comparable to the World Trade Center massacre. It was, in its very design, precisely the opposite: a defensive response to an unprovoked attack. The missile was launched in reaction to the blowing up of two U.S. embassies in Africa by Islamic terrorists, the murder of hundreds of innocent people

and injury to thousands, mostly African civilians. These terrorist acts, like those of September 11, were planned to maximize mayhem inflicted on defenseless people. The American counterstrike, by contrast, was shaped by a concern to prevent the loss of innocent life. The missile was fired at night, so that no one would be in the building when it was hit. The target was selected because it was suspected of being a factory producing chemical weapons, not a pharmaceutical plant. However culpable Clinton may have been for this blunder, clearly he did not deserve Chomsky's vilification.

Far from being exceptional, Chomsky's malicious attempt to use this incident in order to diminish the monstrosity of the World Trade Center attack typifies his writing. It is a telling measure of the anti-American obsession that imbues everything he writes and says.

The same obsession characterized his observations a few days after the World Trade Center bombing, when he provided a historical perspective on the incident. His remarks were calculated to present America as the devil incarnate, a worthy enemy and target for the forces of "social justice" all over the world. The World Trade Center attack was significant because it was the first time the "national territory" of America itself had been attacked since the War of 1812. (In Chomsky's calculus, the attack on Pearl Harbor doesn't count because Hawaii was a "colony" at the time. The fact that it was a benignly run colony and is now the proud state of a democratic Union naturally counts for nothing in Chomsky's relentlessly negative vision.)

The significance of 9/11 was that the "Third World" was striking back at America for more than a century of aggressions on *its* territory:

During these years [i.e., between 1812 and 1941], the U.S. annihilated the indigenous population (millions of people), conquered half of Mexico, intervened violently in the surrounding region, conquered Hawaii and the Philippines (killing hundreds of thousands of Filipinos), and in the past half century particularly, extended its resort to force throughout much of the world. The number of victims is colossal. For the first time, the guns have been directed the other way. That is a dramatic change.³

Listening to Noam Chomsky, you can almost feel the justice of Osama bin Laden's malignant death package. And if you were one of the hundreds of thousands of young people who had been exposed to Chomsky's anti-American screeds, if you had read, for example, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*—Chomsky's best-selling pamphlet—you could extrapolate justifications for blind terror against the United States from all the years since Pearl Harbor as well.

In *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*, you could learn that in the first battle of the Cold War struggle against the Soviet Empire, "the United States was picking up where the Nazis had left off." According to Chomsky, during the Cold War, American operations behind the Iron Curtain included "a 'secret army' under U.S.-Nazi auspices that sought to provide agents and military supplies to armies that had been established by Hitler and which were still operating inside the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe through the early 1950s." During the Cold War, according to Chomsky, U.S. support for legitimate governments against Communist subversion in Latin America led to U.S. complicity by John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson in "the methods of Heinrich Himmler's extermination squads."

According to Chomsky, there is "a close correlation worldwide between torture and U.S. aid." Thus, America "invaded" Vietnam in order to slaughter its people. Even after the last American left Vietnam in 1975, under Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, "the major policy goal of the U.S. has been to maximize repression and suffering in the countries [of Indo-China] that were devastated by our violence. The degree of the cruelty is quite astonishing."⁴

According to Chomsky, "the pretext for Washington's terrorist wars [he is referring to the attempts in the 1980s and 1990s to rescue the people of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chile, Guatemala and Iraq from the clutches of their Communist oppressors] was self-defense, the standard official justification for just about any monstrous act, even the Nazi Holocaust."⁵

In sum, according to Chomsky, America is Nazi Germany and "legally speaking, there's a very solid case for impeaching every American president since the Second World War. They've

all been either outright war criminals or involved in serious war crimes.”⁶ What decent, caring human being who was persuaded to believe this would not want to see America and its war criminals brought to justice? Anthrax would probably be too good for them.

According to Chomsky—parroting his Marxist mentors⁷—what Uncle Sam really wants is to steal from the poor and give to the rich. America’s crusade against Communism was not a battle for human freedom, but actually a war “to protect our doctrine that the rich should plunder the poor.”⁸ This is why, according to Chomsky, we have busied ourselves in launching a new crusade against what he regards as a fictive terrorism after the end of the Cold War.

The winding down of the Cold War presented new problems for a predatory nation like America. In particular, “the technique for controlling the domestic population has to shift.... New enemies have to be invented. It becomes hard to disguise the fact that the real enemy has always been [the poor]—in particular, Third World miscreants who seek to break out of the service role.”⁹

Underpinning this perspective on American policy is a cardinal Chomsky principle: that America is motivated by a fear that the Third World will seek to prosper on its own (outside the American empire). Those countries who threaten to succeed—in Chomsky’s absurd perspective these include all Marxist governments—America regards as “viruses.” During the Cold War, according to Chomsky, America’s leaders were not really concerned about the expansion of Soviet and Chinese totalitarianism. “Except for a few madmen and nitwits, none feared [Communist] conquest—they were afraid of a positive example of successful development.” This prompts him to ask: “What do you do when you have a virus? First you destroy it, then you inoculate potential victims, so that the disease does not spread. That’s basically the U.S. strategy in the Third World.”¹⁰

No wonder they all want to bomb us.

Schooled in these big lies, taught to see America as the incarnation of Corporate Greed and politically a twin of the Third Reich, why wouldn’t young people—with no historical

memory—come to believe that the danger facing mankind lies in Washington rather than Baghdad or Kabul?

It would be easy to demonstrate how on every page of every book and in every statement that Chomsky has written, the facts are twisted, the political context is distorted and even inverted, and the historical record is systematically traduced; how every piece of evidence Chomsky assembles and every analysis he makes is subordinated to the overweening purpose of his life-work, which is to justify an *idée fixe*—his pathological hatred of his own country. But there really is no need to do this: virtually every Chomsky argument exists to serve the same repetitive end, and to encounter one is to encounter them all.

Consider the attacks of 9/11. Their targets were the institutions of American power that Chomsky despises: Wall Street (the World Trade Center) and the Pentagon. On the day of the attacks, the Twin Towers were filled—as they normally would be—with bankers, brokers, international traders and corporate lawyers, Chomsky's hated "ruling class"—the very people who (he believes) were running the "global order" so as to rob the poor in behalf of the rich. But Chomsky knows better than to celebrate an event that took so many innocent lives. To resolve this dilemma he cynically manipulates the facts to serve his myths: "The primary victims, as usual, were working people: janitors, secretaries, firemen, etc." He then lards this error with another cynical layer: "It is likely to be a crushing blow to Palestinians and other poor and oppressed people." This remark calls to mind the old joke about how *The Nation* would do an end-of-days headline: "WORLD COMING TO AN END. POOR AND OPPRESSED TO SUFFER MOST."

Chomsky's little bestseller, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*, is a capsule version of his larger caricature of the policy and practices of America in the world. It uses U.S. actions in the Cold War as a database for its case that America is the evil genie in world affairs.¹¹ Chomsky's followers are quick to point out that a lot of footnoted facts appear in his texts. But an analysis of this little tract will show that facts only seem to appear in his text: each detail has been ripped out of any meaningful historical context and then so violently distorted that the result is no more con-

nected to real-world events than those that appear in Harry Potter's *Muggles' Guide to Magic*.

In *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*, the bipolar world of the Cold War disappears so that only one actor struts the historical stage. This fundamental distortion renders every statement about these events false. In the real world, the Cold War was about America's effort to organize a coalition of nations and democratic movements against the Soviet empire, which had conquered and enslaved more than a billion people. The Cold War ended when the empire collapsed and the walls that had kept its victims imprisoned came tumbling down. In Chomsky's imagined world, the Soviet empire hardly exists; not a single American action is seen as a response to Soviet initiatives and the war is "analyzed" as though it had only one side.

This would be tantamount to writing a history of the Second World War without mentioning Hitler or noticing that the actions of the Axis powers had any influence on its developments. In Chomsky's hands, matters get even worse. If one were to follow his method in analyzing World War II, one would list every problematic act committed by any element in the vast coalition attempting to stop Hitler, and would attribute them all to a calculated policy of the United States; one would then provide a report card of these "crimes" as if it were the historical record itself. The list of the worst acts of which the allies could be accused and the most dishonorable motives they may be said to have acted upon would provide the data from which America's portrait would be drawn. Using this method, even an imbecile could produce a picture of America as the Great Satan.

What Uncle Sam Really Wants begins with America's emergence from the Second World War, and immediately distorts the motives that inspired America's role in the war to put them in the worst possible light. In contrast to its "industrial rivals," the United States is described as having "benefited enormously" from the conflict; no mention is made in this account of the 250,000 lives America lost, its Marshall Plan aid to revive those same rivals after the war or, for that matter, the role it played in the victory over Nazi Germany and the Axis powers. In Chomsky's hands, America in 1945 had no interest in rebuilding

devastated nations but was, instead, interested only in profiting from others' misery and aspiring to world domination. "The people who determine American policy were carefully planning how to shape the postwar world," he asserts without evidence. "American planners—from those in the State Department to those on the Council on Foreign Relations (one major channel by which business leaders influence foreign policy)—agreed that the dominance of the United States had to be maintained."¹²

Chomsky never names the actual people who agreed that American policy should be a quest for world dominance, nor how they achieved unanimity in deciding to transform a famously isolationist country into a global power.¹³ In his analysis, America has no internal politics that matter. Therefore, he does not acknowledge, let alone attempt to analyze, the powerful strains of isolationism in American policy and in the Republican Party—the very party of Wall Street and the Council on Foreign Relations businessmen who exert such influence on American purposes. Above all, he does not explain why—if world domination was really America's goal in 1945—America disbanded its vast wartime armies overnight and brought them home.

Between 1945 and 1946, in fact, America demobilized 1.6 million military personnel. By contrast, the Soviet Union (absent from Chomsky's narrative) kept its two-million-man army in the countries of Eastern Europe, whose governments it had already begun systematically to undermine and overthrow. It was, in fact, not Chomsky's perfidious "plan," but the Soviet absorption of the formerly independent states of Eastern Europe in the years between 1945 and 1948 that triggered America's subsequent rearmament, the creation of NATO and the overseas projection of American power. All these steps were designed to contain an expansionist Soviet empire and prevent a repetition of the appeasement process that had led to World War II.

In other words, the dominant facts and determining forces of the Cold War are simply ignored in Chomsky's worldview or contemptuously dismissed: "Except for a few madmen and nitwits, none feared [Communist] conquest...." Yet Communist expansion (and conquest) is exactly what Americans feared, and this determined everything that followed, particularly America's global military deployment.

In any case, the historic events that led to the end of the Cold War refute Chomsky's argument conclusively, showing that this protracted confrontation—with the formation of the postwar Western alliances and the mobilizing of Western forces—was principally caused by the Soviet conquest of Eastern Europe. This is the only explanation for the fact that the Cold War came to an abrupt end as soon as the Berlin Wall fell and the states of Eastern Europe were freed from the grip of Soviet power. It was this goal of liberating several hundred million people—and not any American quest for world dominance—that explains American Cold War policy. But there is no attempt to address these facts in the pages of Chomsky's works; they might as well never have happened.

Having begun the story of the Cold War with a false picture of the historical forces at work, Chomsky is ready to carry out his scorched-earth campaign against the democracy that has provided him with a privileged—and free—existence for more than seventy years. "In 1949," he writes, "U.S. espionage in Eastern Europe had been turned over to a network run by Reinhard Gehlen, who had headed Nazi military intelligence on the Eastern Front. This network was one part of the U.S.–Nazi alliance...."¹⁴

Gehlen, an officer of the Wehrmacht, did not head Nazi intelligence as Chomsky asserts, but even this smear is minor compared with the breathtaking disregard for historical reality displayed in his formulation. In less than one small pamphlet page, Chomsky jumps from 1945 to 1949, skipping over the Red Army's refusal to withdraw its armies from Eastern Europe, the swallowing of Eastern Europe's independent nations, and the establishment of Moscow-controlled police states throughout the region. He ignores the aggressive moves of the huge Moscow-directed Communist parties of Italy and France as they agitated for the overthrow of their war-weakened governments and the absorption of both countries into the Soviet bloc. These dire circumstances explain why the United States might seek the help of a defeated military intelligence apparatus for information about the "Eastern Front."

The United States used Gehlen—not the other way around,

as Chomsky's calculated syntax implies ("U.S. espionage... had been turned over... to Gehlen"). Despite Chomsky's assertion, there was never a "U.S.–Nazi alliance." The United States had crushed Nazi Germany four years earlier, and by 1949—unlike the Soviet Union—had imposed a democratic political structure on West Germany as the condition of a German peace. By contrast, East Germany, which remained under Soviet military control and political tutelage, remained a brutal, anti-Semitic police state—crucial and obvious facts ignored in Chomsky's text.

Given these realities, the use of a West German military intelligence network with assets both in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union was a practical compromise to make in order to defend the democratic states of the West and the hundreds of millions of people who were now captives of a ruthless empire almost identical in structure and method to the Third Reich itself.¹⁵ Far from being a "Nazi" taint on America, this episode was a necessary part of the Cold War effort that eventually led to a historic victory for human freedom. With the help of the Gehlen network, the United States kept Soviet expansion in check and eventually liberated the oppressed populations of Eastern Europe from the horrors of the Communist system.

Chomsky describes all the postwar events not only without reference to the oppressive nature of the Soviet empire or the ultimate success of American policy, but also as though the United States, rather than having defeated Hitler, had instead made a pact to continue his regime: "These [U.S.] operations included a 'secret army' under U.S.–Nazi auspices that sought to provide agents and military supplies to armies that had been established by Hitler and which were still operating inside the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe through the early 1950s."¹⁶ This typical Chomsky inversion of what actually happened—the restoration of democracy through American actions—is as brazen as the Communist propaganda that the Kremlin was distributing in those years, and from which it is cynically cribbed.

The equation of American Cold War policies with Nazi Germany is the principle motif of Chomsky's spurious account of the postwar era. The creation of a Nazi world order—with business

interests at the top and the “working classes and the poor” at the bottom—was America’s true agenda, he claims. And “the major thing that stood in the way of this was the anti-fascist resistance, so we suppressed it all over the world, often installing fascists and Nazi collaborators in its place.”¹⁷ Chomsky is referring to America’s efforts to counter Communist insurgencies whose goal was to draw their respective countries into the Soviet orbit.

In 1947, a civil war in Greece became the first Cold War test of America’s resolve to prevent the Kremlin from extending its tentacles beyond Eastern Europe. Naturally, Chomsky presents the conflict as a struggle between the “anti-Nazi resistance” and U.S.-backed (and “Nazi”) interests. In his description, these interests were “U.S. investors and local businessmen,” and—of course—“the beneficiaries included Nazi collaborators, while the primary victims were the workers and the peasants.”¹⁸

In reality, the leaders of the anti-Communist forces in Greece were not Nazis. On the other hand, what Chomsky refers to as the “anti-Nazi resistance” was, in fact, the Communist Party and its fellow-traveling pawns. What he leaves out of his account, as a matter of course and necessity, are the proximity of the Soviet Red Army to Greece and the intention of the Greek Communists, in the event they won the civil war, to establish a Soviet police state. He also ignores the enormously positive result of America’s intervention. The defeat of the Greek Communist Left paved the way for an unprecedented economic development benefiting all social classes and the eventual establishment of a political democracy, which soon brought democratic socialists to power rather than the capitalist servants of American interests predicted by Chomsky’s worldview.

Needless to say, no country in which Chomsky’s “anti-fascists” won—and there were several—ever established a democracy or produced any significant betterment in the economic conditions of the great majority of its inhabitants. These countries included Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Bulgaria, Albania, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, among others. The dark consequences of Europe’s civil wars put a markedly different color on every detail of what happened in Greece and elsewhere than is to be found in Chomsky’s

caricature, suggesting an entirely different conclusion as to how American actions should be judged.

The pivotal chapter of *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*, called “The Threat of a Good Example,” is the Chomsky paradigm for explaining America’s diabolical behavior in Third World countries. The author prefaces his explanation by drawing attention to what he describes as the paradox of America’s alleged preference for engaging in atrocities when dealing with Third World leftists. Such practices might seem unbusinesslike and even uncharacteristic to anyone familiar with Americans and their institutions. For instance:

What the U.S.-run contra forces did in Nicaragua, or what our terrorist proxies do in El Salvador or Guatemala, isn’t only ordinary killing. A major element is brutal, sadistic torture—beating infants against rocks, hanging women by their feet with their breasts cut off and the skin of their face peeled back so that they’ll bleed to death, chopping people’s heads off and putting them on stakes.

“U.S.-run” forces and “our terrorist proxies,” we read, do this sort of thing routinely and everywhere: “No country is exempt from this treatment, no matter how unimportant.”¹⁹ Of course, there are no citations in Chomsky’s text to support the claim that these atrocities took place, or that the United States directed them or was in any meaningful sense responsible for them. Nor would it ever occur to Chomsky that such atrocities might be indigenous to the countries themselves (and the “proxies” involved), or that they might be perpetrated by both sides of the conflicts—as was the case in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Chomsky then explains his so-called paradox:

As far as American business is concerned, Nicaragua could disappear and nobody would notice. The same is true of El Salvador. But both have been subjected to murderous assaults by the U.S., at a cost of hundreds of thousands of lives and many billions of dollars.... [Th]e weaker and poorer a country is, the more dangerous it is *as an example* [italics in original]. If a tiny, poor country like Grenada can succeed in bringing about a better life for its people, some other place that has more resources will ask, “why not us?”²⁰

This is the “threat of a good example,” pivotal to Chomsky’s entire take on American foreign policy and postwar history. Its

logic is as follows: What Uncle Sam really wants is to control the world; U.S. control means absolute misery for all the peoples that come under its sway; this means the U.S. cannot allow any little country anywhere in the world to realize there might be better ways to develop its resources than through free market institutions or by allowing U.S. investment. Chomsky uses the American intervention in Grenada as an example: "Grenada has a hundred thousand people who produce a little nutmeg, and you could hardly find it on a map. But when Grenada began to undergo a mild social revolution, Washington quickly moved to destroy the threat."²¹ This is Chomsky's entire commentary in this text on the U.S. intervention in Grenada.

In fact, something quite different took place in Grenada. In 1979, there was a coup d'état that established a Marxist dictatorship on the island, complete with a Soviet-style "politburo." This was a tense period in the Cold War. The Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan, and guerrillas armed by the Communist dictatorship in Cuba were spreading the totalitarian virus in Central America. Then, in the early 1980s, Cuban military personnel appeared in Grenada too. They began to build an enormous airport capable of accommodating Soviet nuclear bombers, a step that quickly provoked tension between Washington and the Grenadian dictatorship. In 1983, in the midst of these tensions, there was another coup. This one was led by the Marxist minister of defense, who assassinated the Marxist dictator along with half his politburo, including his pregnant minister of education. The new dictator put the entire island—including U.S. citizens resident there—under house arrest. It was at this point that the Reagan administration decided it was time to send in the Marines to protect U.S. citizens, stop the construction of the military airport and restore democracy to the little island.

Nor was the United States government the only one concerned about the events in Grenada. The U.S. intervention was made at the formal request of four governments of Caribbean countries who feared a Communist military presence in their neighborhood. Finally, a public opinion poll taken after the U.S. operation showed that 85 percent of the citizens of Grenada welcomed America's help in restoring their freedom.

There was no "threat of a good example" in Grenada. More

generally, there are no good examples of progressive social experiments anywhere in the world to serve as the threats that Chomsky invokes. There is not a single Marxist country anywhere that has ever provided a “good example” in the sense of making its economy better or its people freer. Chomsky seems to have missed this most basic fact of twentieth-century history: socialism doesn’t work, and to the extent that it does work, its results are horrific.

The example of Korea, a Cold War battlefield, provides as conclusive an example as one might imagine. Fifty years ago, in one of the Cold War’s early conflicts, U.S. intervention prevented Communist North Korea from conquering the anti-Communist South. Today the Communist North has achieved Chomsky’s dream of being independent of the United States, but—contrary to his paradigm—it is one of the poorest countries in the world. A million or more of its citizens have starved in recent years, even while its Marxist despot was feverishly investing his nation’s scarce capital in an intercontinental ballistic missile program.

In South Korea, by contrast, there are fifty thousand U.S. troops stationed along the border—not, as Chomsky would maintain, to occupy it, but to defend its territory from a desperate attack by the Communist North. For fifty years, supposedly nefarious American business interests and self-interested investors have operated freely in South Korea. The results are interesting. In 1950, South Korea had a per capita income of \$250 and was as poor as Cuba or Vietnam. Today, South Korea is an industrial power and its per capita income is \$8490, more than thirty times greater than it was before it became an ally and investment region of the United States (or, as Chomsky would insist, an exploited “neo-colony” of American capitalism). Meanwhile, per capita income in isolated (Communist) Vietnam is \$370, not much more than it was half a century ago.

America’s protégé, South Korea is not yet a full-fledged democracy; but it does have elections, a multiparty political system and an independent press that provides its people with information from the outside world. This is quite a different picture from socialist North Korea, whose starving citizens are ruled by a one-party state and have no access to information

their dictator does not approve. Who is really afraid of the threat of a good example? Chomsky's friends or Washington's?

The "threat of a good example" is the same utopian nonsense that inspired progressives in the last century to kill 100 million people. Soviet Communism—which America's dedicated Cold Warriors finally vanquished—was an imperialist system that ruined nations and enslaved their citizens. But Chomsky, who spent the Cold War enjoying America's freedoms while relentlessly attacking their source, still dismisses America's fear of Communism as a mere "cover" for its own diabolical schemes. Far from acknowledging America's historic, truly progressive achievement, he explains the Cold War and one of its lost battles, the Vietnam War, this way:

The real fear was that if the people of Indochina achieved independence and justice, the people of Thailand would emulate it, and if that worked, they'd try it in Malaya, and pretty soon Indonesia would pursue an independent path, and by then a significant area [of America's empire] would have been lost.²²

This is an exceptionally crude Marxist version of the domino theory, which already was transparently false by the time Chomsky wrote his little piece of agitprop. America did leave Indochina—Cambodia and Thailand included—in 1973 and in 1975. For the next twenty-five years, Vietnam pursued an independent path, yet no good example ensued: the Communist utopia was as stillborn in Vietnam as everywhere else. Vietnam is as poor as it ever was—one of the poorest nations in the world; and its people still suffer under the harsh rule of a primitive Marxist police state.

After its defeat in Vietnam, the United States withdrew its military forces from the entire Indochinese peninsula—something Chomsky, along with the rest of the Left, had fiercely denied it would ever do. The result was that Cambodia was overrun by the Khmer Rouge—in other words, by the Communist forces that the Vietnamese Communists, along with Chomsky and the entire American Left, had supported until then. Freed from American military interference, the Khmer Rouge proceeded to kill two million Cambodians who, in their view, stood

in the way of the progressive “good example” they intended to create. Chomsky earned himself a bad reputation by first denying and then minimizing the Cambodian genocide until the facts overwhelmed his case. Now, of course, he blames the killing fields on the United States.²³

Chomsky also blames the United States for the fact that “Vietnam is a basket case” and not a good example. “Our basic goal—the crucial one, the one that really counted—was to destroy the virus [of independent development], and we did achieve that. Vietnam is a basket case, and the U.S. is doing what it can to keep it that way.”²⁴ This is the all-purpose leftist excuse for every leftist failure: *The devil made them do it*. But the economic failure of Communist Vietnam is essentially no different from that of every other Marxist-inspired economy.

Cuba, for example, is a Marxist state that has not been bombed and has not suffered a war, but it’s still an economic “basket case,” far poorer today than it was when Castro took power in 1959. Then, Cuba was the second-richest country in Latin America; now it’s the third poorest, just above Haiti and Nicaragua (countries that were also ruined by Marxist fanatics). Naturally, Chomskyites claim that the U.S. economic boycott is responsible for Cuba’s dramatic economic decline. *The devil made them do it*. Yet again, this is stale Communist claptrap, a repetition of an excuse that was concocted to explain the Soviet failure. The rest of the world—including all of Latin America—trades with Cuba, and has traded with Cuba all forty-odd years of the Castro regime. Cuba is free not only to buy and sell goods to Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia, but also to receive millions of dollars in aid. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviet Union gave Cuba the equivalent of ten Marshall Plans in economic subsidies and assistance—tens of billions of dollars for an island with a population of less than ten million people.

Cuba is a fertile country with a tropical climate; its failure is human and internal. Cuba is poor because it is a typical socialist, Marxist and Communist state, complete with the full apparatus of police repression and sunless dungeons, which has wasted all the economic resources it has been given on delusional social schemes. Cuba is poor because it is run by a sadistic

lunatic whose brain has been unhinged by years of sycophantic adulation. Cuba is poor because there America lost the Cold War. Cuba is poor because it has followed Chomsky's prescriptions, not America's; and Cuba's poverty is what those prescriptions would create in any country that followed them.

It is the illusion of Communists and reactionaries that there is a way to prosperity other than the way of the capitalist free market. It is this same illusion that *causes* the economic misery of states like Cuba and North Korea and Vietnam, and would have caused equivalent miseries in Grenada and Greece and South Korea if America had not intervened militarily and stopped the Chomskyite reactionaries in their tracks.

The illusion that socialism promises a better future is not only the cause of mass poverty and death in the countries seduced by its followers, it is also the cause of the Chomsky cult. It is the illusion itself, the messianic hope that impassions the "progressive" Left. This hope is a chimera, and it creates a worldview that is strictly Manichean. Those who oppose socialism, Marxism, Communism, Chomskyism embody evil; they are the party of Satan, and their champion, America, is the Great Satan himself. Chomskyism is, like its models, a religion of social hatred.

Chomsky's great service to the progressive faith is to deny the history of the last one hundred years, which is the history of "progressive" atrocity and failure. In the twentieth century, progressives in power killed 100 million people in their attempt to realize an impossible dream, while reducing whole continents to poverty and misery.²⁵ But as far as Noam Chomsky is concerned, these catastrophes never happened. "I don't much like the terms left and right," Chomsky complains in another ludicrous screed, *The Common Good*.²⁶ "What's called the left includes Leninism [i.e., Communism], which I consider ultra-right in many respects.... Leninism has nothing to do with the values of the left—in fact, it's radically opposed to them."²⁷

You have to pinch yourself when reading sentences like that.

The purpose of such Humpty-Dumpty mutilations of language is perfectly understandable, however. It is to preserve the

faith for those who cannot live without some form of the Communist creed. Communism is dead. Long live the Revolution. The Communist catastrophes can have “nothing to do with the values of the left” because if they did, the Left would have to answer for the evil it has done, and confront the fact that as a movement it is intellectually and morally bankrupt. Progressives would have to face the fact that they have brought about the deaths of 100 million people for an idea that didn’t work—when all is said and done, for nothing.

The real “threat of a good example” is the American system, which has lifted more people out of poverty—within its borders and all over the world—than all the socialists and progressives since the beginning of time. To neutralize this threat, it is necessary to kill the memory of American achievement along with the American idea. This, surely, is Noam Chomsky’s mission in life and his everlasting infamy.

NOTES

- ¹ Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York, 2003), p. 4.
- ² Available at www.zmag.org.
- ³ Interview, September 19, 2001, www.zmag.org.
- ⁴ Noam Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* (Berkeley, 1992), pp. 8, 18, 29, 31, 32, 56–58.
- ⁵ Naom Chomsky, *Profit over People* (New York, 1999), p. 102.
- ⁶ Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*, p. 32.
- ⁷ Chomsky has set up a smokescreen to the effect that he is really not a Marxist or a Communist, but a follower of obscure writers like Anton Pannekoek and Paul Mattick, and the anarchosocialist Prince Peter Kropotkin. But since he has spent his intellectual life making excuses for (and defending) Stalinist regimes—Nicaragua's is only the most obvious—and now is a fifth-columnist for Islamic fascists, only the terminally credulous would take his protestations seriously.
- ⁸ Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*, p. 79.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 1, “The Main Goals of U.S. Foreign Policy.”
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.
- ¹³ His technique is to select quotes from isolated individuals and government documents that can be made to appear as though they lend credibility to his malicious distortions.
- ¹⁴ Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*, p. 8 (the 2nd page of Chomsky's text).
- ¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harvest Books, 1973).
- ¹⁶ Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*, p. 8.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

²¹ Ibid., p. 22.

²² Ibid., pp. 23–24.

²³ Ibid., p. 59.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 59–60.

²⁵ See David Horowitz, “The Road to Nowhere,” in *The Politics of Bad Faith* (New York, 1998).

²⁶ Noam Chomsky, *The Common Good* (Chicago, 1999); interviews with David Barsamian.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 120.

PART IV

CHOMSKY AND LINGUISTICS

EIGHT

A CORRUPTED LINGUISTICS

Robert D. Levine and Paul M. Postal

Noam Chomsky is arguably the best known and most influential linguist of all time. He is widely thought to have, among other contributions, invented a revolutionary view of the syntax of natural languages, so-called transformational grammar. He is generally given credit for having redirected inquiry into language in new directions and, most notably, to have shown or at least gone a long way toward showing that the acquisition of language by children depends on an innate system, which he often refers to as a faculty of language.* Despite his exalted standing, however, almost all of Chomsky's linguistic views have been controversial and, we would suggest, have become ever more so over time. Much of the lavish praise heaped on his work is, we believe, driven by uncritical acceptance (often by nonlinguists) of claims and promises made during the early years of his academic activity; the claims have by now largely proved to be wrong or without real content, and the promises have gone unfulfilled.

*For highly positive introductory accounts of Chomsky's work in linguistics aimed at nonspecialists and stressing the ideas just mentioned, among others, one can consult, e.g., D'Agostino's 1986 study *Chomsky's System of Ideas*, Haley and Lunsford's 1994 interview-based volume *Noam Chomsky*, Smith's nearly hagiographic *Chomsky: Ideas and Ideals*, as well as the 1999 work by McGilvray and Winston's short 2002 account.

Those who are not professional linguists—such as journalist Larissa MacFarquhar, author of a recent lengthy profile of Chomsky in the *New Yorker*—often discern a fundamental *contrast* between Chomsky’s linguistic work and his sociopolitical ideas. Where the former are typically taken to be brilliant, revolutionary and widely accepted—in all, a massive scientific contribution—the latter are seen as radical and controversial, and are often reviled. Another observer, Oliver Kamm, expresses this point of view exactly: “It’s trivial stuff written by a man who, like Noam Chomsky, is authoritative in one discipline and incorrigibly silly when he ventures outside it.”†

But to us, the two strands of Chomsky’s work manifest exactly the *same* key properties: a deep disregard and contempt for the truth, a monumental disdain for standards of inquiry,¹ a relentless strain of self-promotion, remarkable descents into incoherence² and a penchant for verbally abusing those who disagree with him.³ There is also a marked similarity in the way he disseminates his linguistic and his political ideas: often in off-the-cuff, independently unsupported remarks in interviews and lectures, or in anecdotal comments embedded in articles, and so forth.⁴ This mode of promulgation shares nothing with universally acknowledged requirements of historical or social research, still less with those of a *science*.‡ Indeed, a remarkable feature of Chomsky’s linguistic writings is how few of them (the percentage has shrunk to almost zero over time) are professionally refereed works in linguistic journals. This is very significant since the professional review process—which arguably has intervened only marginally in the evaluation of Chomsky’s work—is rightly taken to be a hallmark of modern science and a key shield against error, deception and fraud. Finally, like his sociopolitical writings, Chomsky’s linguistic output often represents outright invention, unanchored by demonstrable fact.⁵

Such a harshly negative evaluation evidently demands seri-

**New Yorker*, March 19, 2003.

†See Kamm’s 2003 remarks and also Flint’s 1995 *Boston Globe* interview for a similar perspective.

‡See e.g. Chapter 4 of Broad and Wade’s 1982 study of scientific fraud.

ous justification. Here we can touch on only a few supporting considerations; fuller treatments of the low standards manifested in Chomsky's linguistic work can be found elsewhere.* The following pages briefly document four different instances of the several types of intellectual misconduct present in his writing on linguistics: intentional deception; pretending for decades that a principle already shown to be false was still a valid linguistic universal; adopting other linguists' research proposals without credit; and falsely denigrating other sciences to make his own work seem less inadequate.

Deliberate Deception

James A. Donald, David Horowitz and many other critics of Chomsky's *political* writings have often accused him of intentional deception in supporting his radical ideas, as in his attempt to exonerate Pol Pot from charges of genocide in Cambodia and his assertion that the United States collaborated *with Nazis* against the Soviet Union during and after World War II.⁶ This syndrome infects his linguistics as well.⁷ (The following discussion is somewhat technical, but necessarily so to indicate the intellectual corruption of Chomsky's work.)

One early focus of Chomsky's linguistic investigations was English *passive* sentences like (1):

- (1)a. Cathy was praised by the teacher.
- b. The evidence was ignored by some jurors.

Such sentences bear a systematic relation to corresponding *active* ones like:

- (2)a. The teacher praised Cathy.
- b. Some jurors ignored the evidence.

Any adequate view of these sentences and of English grammar in general needs a mechanism for relating (1a) and (2a), (1b) and (2b), and so forth. Among other things, this mechanism must account for the fact that *Cathy* in (1a) is understood to play

*Especially pertinent are the work by Levine and Postal, the 2004 volume by Postal (especially Chapters 6–14), that by Sampson and the two studies by Seuren.

the same semantic role as *Cathy* in (2a)—that is, *Cathy* gets praised in both, while *the teacher* in (1a) is understood to play the same role as *The teacher* in (2a)—that is, as the individual who does the praising. In Chomsky's early work, this mechanism was represented by his *passive transformation*, which provided a description of a passive clause on the basis of the structure of the corresponding active. (A bit more abstract detail on such descriptions follows.)

Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*, his earliest and, in terms of his career as a linguist, his most important book, claimed that this transformation determined for every transitive sentence of the form [*nominal*₁ *verb nominal*₂], like (2a, b), the existence of a corresponding passive of the form [*nominal*₂ *is verb + en by nominal*₁], e.g. like (1a, b).⁸ While this rule properly accounted for cases like (1a, b), the claim was vastly too general. This is shown by such impossible passives as those corresponding to their actives in (3):

- (3)a. The kids want ice cream. / Ice cream is wanted by the kids.
- b. That movie starred Julia. / Julia was starred by that movie.
- c. The ocean liner neared the iceberg. / The iceberg was neared by the ocean liner.
- d. Karen's remarks betrayed contempt for socialism. / Contempt for socialism was betrayed by Karen's remarks.

Of course, even honest researchers can make serious factual errors.* But Chomsky's 1957 claim that every transitive-looking clause permitted a passive analog was no *mere* mistake; he was perfectly aware of its falsehood and had himself provided counterexamples in his unpublished 1955 study *The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory* (finally published in 1975). There he cited, e.g., *this weighs three pounds / he got his punishment* as "instances of actives with no corresponding passive."[†] Hence, despite knowing at least two years before the publication of *Syntactic Structures* that

*See *Syntactic Structures*, pp. 42–43 and 76.

†See *The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory*, p. 565.

his claim about the passive rule was untrue, Chomsky produced an entirely unhedged and unqualified account without reference to the earlier passage. That is, in a work introducing his conception of transformational grammar to the general public, he *knowingly* published a false assertion about English syntax.⁹

Pretending and Bluffing: The A-over-A Principle

While Chomsky's linguistic writings abound in citations of putatively *universal principles* he has discovered governing the grammars of all natural languages, justification of these principles in his writings often depends on a near-total absence of serious standards of evaluation. It is not, as a nonlinguist might imagine, that the supposed universals hold for English but fail for some exotic language; not atypically they fail even for English.*

A clear example is the so-called *A-over-A Principle*, first found in the published version of a famous lecture given by Chomsky to the 1962 International Congress of Linguists:

(4) "What it asserts is that if the phrase X of category A is embedded within a larger phrase ZXW which is also of category A, then no rule applying to the category A applies to X (but only to ZXW)."[†]

To fully grasp this technical claim, the reader needs to first understand what the notions "phrase," "category" and "rule" refer to in the passage above. None of these ideas is particularly obscure, but all require some background information about how linguists view the structure of natural-language sentences.

A fundamental insight of modern linguistics was the explicit recognition that sentences are not simply chains of words following each other like beads on a string, but rather objects revealing internal grouping and subgrouping. The evidence for this is strong but somewhat indirect; it depends on comparisons of sentences having some systematic relationship

*See the remarks of Dutch linguist Pieter Seuren in his marvelous 1998 study, p. 252n27.

†See Chomsky's remark in his 1964 article, pp. 930–31.

to each other. For example, in the pairs of sentences below, each of the strings of words in brackets in the (a) example can be relocated to the front of the sentence, as shown in the (b) example. (An underline indicates the position from which the material at the front of the sentence has been displaced and capitals represent strongly stressed words.)

- (5)a. I would never tell Robin nasty stories about [your cousin].
 b. [Your **COUSIN**], I would **NEVER** tell Robin nasty stories about ____.
- (6)a. You would never tell Robin nasty stories [about **WHOSE** cousin]?
 b. [About **WHOSE** cousin] would you never tell Robin nasty stories ____?
- (7)a. Leslie said she never will tell Robin nasty stories about your cousin, and I'm sure she never **WILL** [tell Robin nasty stories about your cousin].
 b. Leslie said she never will tell Robin nasty stories about your cousin, and [tell Robin nasty stories about your cousin] I'm sure she never **WILL** ____.

One should not assume, however, that just *any* string of words has the privilege of displacing to the initial point of a sentence. Readers who try to form examples parallel to those above by fronting the words *Robin nasty stories* or *stories about your* will find that the results are simply not English sentences. For instance, consider the following:

- (8)a. Robin nasty stories, I would never tell ____ about your cousin.
 b. Stories about your, I would never tell Robin nasty ____ cousin.

A productive line of research that has informed studies of the syntax of natural languages for about half a century has taken the bracketed expressions in examples (5)–(7) above to be displaceable because they are structural *units*, cohering in a way that can be precisely specified using certain fairly simple mathematical models. Such units are commonly referred to as *phrases*. The generalization then is that displaceability is restricted to phrases; the displaced sequences in (8) involve not a single

phrase, but parts of different phrases; hence they cannot properly be displaced. The structural units for which examples (5)–(7) constitute part of the evidence are phrases of the kind that Chomsky referred to in the passage quoted earlier in (4).

Readers who have followed the implications of the notion “phrase” for the examples already given in (5)–(7) may have seen that consistent application of this notion to (5a), for example, requires recognition of a richer phrasal structure than originally displayed. Assuming that the substrings of displaceable words in (5), (6) and (7) are all units, the structure of (5a) must be something more like (9):

(9) I would never [tell Robin nasty stories [about [your cousin]]].

The outermost brackets, indicating the largest-sized phrase, are justified by the displacement shown in (7b); the next level of phrasal bracketing down is justified by (6b), and so on. Clearly then, one has reason to believe that words and phrases can combine to form larger phrases.

Given the notion “phrase,” one can observe a characteristic of the formation of English sentences by displacement that can be stated in the following proposition:

(10) A phrase may be moved to the front of the sentence it appears in.

While this is informally and imprecisely stated, it roughly illustrates the notion of “rule” to which Chomsky is appealing in (4). A syntactic rule of the type in question is a general principle regulating the relationship among sentences. What (10) indicates is that, given one well-formed sentence S1, a second well-formed sentence S2 may be formed by the relocation of some phrase element of S1 to the initial position in S2. Chomsky’s claim in (4) was intended to be a kind of metarule, a condition limiting the ways in which any rule like (10) is allowed to apply. To understand (4) completely, we need one more conceptual component, the notion of a phrasal *category*.

A characteristic property of natural-language phrases is that in sentences they often appear in the same places that one of their component words can appear in *alone*. For example, one finds alongside (11a), (11b) as well; but (11c) is not possible:

- (11)a. My cousins can be really difficult.
 b. Cousins can be really difficult.
 c. My can be really difficult.

Such examples can be multiplied in a variety of ways suggesting that the words in a given phrase are not all on a par. Typically, a phrase shares its distribution in sentences with only one of the words it contains, and the others may often be omitted. Linguists therefore identify the category of an overall phrase as being identical to the part of speech of its obligatory element (usually called the *head* of the phrase). Given that *cousins*, for example, is a noun, the phrase *my cousins* is categorized as a noun phrase (abbreviated NP). Similarly, in (12), the whole phrase really is built up around the head word *left*, which cannot be omitted (see (12d)) even though the other words/phrases can be:

- (12)a. Robin left me the key.
 b. Robin left me.
 c. Robin left.
 d. Robin me the key. / Robin me. / Robin the key.

Therefore, *left me the key* is identified as a phrase of the same category as its essential element, the head word *left*. Since that head belongs to the category verb, *left me the key* is characterized as a verb phrase (abbreviated VP).

With this background in mind, we can examine just what Chomsky's claim in (4) predicts. There he was assuming a theoretical focus on some string of words of a certain category, say, NP. "Embedded within a larger phrase ZXW which is also of category A" then meant nothing more than that the original NP occurs *inside*, that is, as part of, another phrase which is also an NP. We saw in (9) that phrases do indeed occur inside other phrases; there the outermost phrase is a VP, the smallest internal phrase an NP. But there is no reason why an NP cannot contain another NP, and we have, in fact, already provided an example of that state of affairs, without having noted it explicitly. Thus, example (13) is, for example, entirely well formed:

- (13) Nasty stories about your cousin, I would NEVER tell
 Robin ____.

So *nasty stories about your cousin* is a phrase. And it is easy to show that its essential word is *stories*, a noun, making *nasty stories about your cousin* an NP. But as already seen, *your cousin*

is also an NP. It follows that *nasty stories about your cousin* has a structure including at least the elements of (14):

(14) [_{NP} nasty stories [about [_{NP} your cousin]]]

At last, then, we come to the point of Chomsky's claim (4). The statement "no rule applying to the category A applies to X (but only to ZXW)" can be paraphrased more simply, in terms of our example, as "no rule applying to the category NP can actually have an effect on an inner NP, but can operate only on the largest phrase labeled NP." In other words, the displacement rule in (10) cannot with respect to the phrase (14) apply to *your cousin*, but only to *nasty stories about your cousin*.

Before turning to evidence bearing on the correctness of this claim, it is useful to examine Chomsky's motivation for proposing a restriction on the application of a rule such as (10). To give an example, the idea was that while the unrestricted phenomenon of (question) phrase dislocation sanctioned by rule (10) works fine to allow (15b), it yields a violation in (16b):

(15)a. Jean discussed some terrorists.

b. Which terrorists did Jean discuss ___?

(16)a. Jean discussed [your video about some terrorists].

b. Which terrorists did Jean discuss [your video about ___]?

This a priori (and perhaps unexpected) gap in the dislocation paradigm is seemingly explained by (4). According to that principle, using (10) on (16a) to yield (16b) must fail because a rule (one fronting phrases like *Which terrorists*) that has applied to a maximal phrase (the object of the verb *discussed* in (15)), has in (16) applied to a phrase of category A (here NP) that is a part of a larger NP, hence another phrase of category A. So far so good for Chomsky's metaprinciple.

But we have already given a clear instance of a violation of (4), namely, (5b). John Robert Ross, in *Constraints on Variables in Syntax*—a 1967 MIT dissertation that Chomsky *directed*—devoted a chapter to arguing that the A-over-A Principle was untenable even for English. Not only has this demonstration never been refuted, but Chomsky himself (in *Language and Mind*, pages 55–56) recognized that Ross had raised genuine difficulties for his A-over-A Principle claims.

Ross showed that the principle was both too weak and too

strong—too weak in that there were relevant ill-formed cases it failed to block; too strong in that (as in (5b)) it wrongly blocked perfectly grammatical cases. He gave these now-famous (in syntactic circles) examples:

- (17)a. the reports, [NP *the height of* [NP *the lettering on* [NP *the covers of* [NP *which*]]] the government prescribes
—,
- b. the reports, [NP *the lettering on* [NP *the covers of* [NP *which*]]], the government prescribes [NP *the height of*
—],
- c. the reports, [NP *the covers of* [NP *which*]] the government prescribes [NP *the height of* [NP *the lettering on*
—]],
- d. the reports, [NP *which*] the government prescribes [NP *the height of* [NP *the lettering on* [NP *the covers of* —]]],

In these so-called nonrestrictive relative clause cases, only (17a) is consistent with the A-over-A Principle, as it involves displacement of the entire object of *prescribes*. Each of (17b–d) involves fronting an NP subpart of a larger NP, just what (4) claims *cannot* happen. In (17d), the displaced NP has successfully been extracted from three containing NPs, in (17c) from two. Significantly, Chomsky's 1972a reference to Ross's work mentioned only the former, less serious, weakness.

Many parallel cases strengthen Ross's claims about the existence of counterexamples; (18b) illustrates an adjectival phrase (AP) displaced from inside another AP; (19b) shows further (so-called *topicalization*) fronting of NPs from inside other NPs.

- (18)a. Jenny was [AP *aware that Frank was* [AP *very angry*]].
b. [AP *Very angry*] though Jenny was [AP *aware that Frank was* —]
c. [AP *Aware that Frank was* [AP *very angry*]] though Jenny was —
- (19)a. I love to hear [NP *stories about* [NP *Robin*]].
b. [NP *Robin*], I love to hear [NP *stories about* —].
c. [NP *Stories about* [NP *Robin*]] I love to hear —.

Ross's work had already undermined any serious basis for Chomsky's view that the A-over-A Principle was a principle of natural language or even of English, and as Ross's Ph.D. disser-

tation director, Chomsky was inevitably aware of the evidence against it. One would naturally assume, therefore, that barring later insights (never achieved) that somehow undermined his student's conclusions, Chomsky would have just *abandoned* the A-over-A Principle as a falsified claim about natural language. But despite never claiming to have refuted Ross's conclusions, he has nonetheless refused to give up the principle, and since 1972 has simply avoided mentioning Ross's critique. Instead, in work after work, he has until recently either cited the A-over-A Principle as a serious, persisting element of his universal grammar, or referred to it in neutral terms without a hint that grounds for its abandonment were already available to him in 1967.¹⁰

The worst aspect of this subterfuge is his touting of a failed principle as a genuine discovery to nonlinguist audiences unprepared to recognize the dishonesty involved. He cited it in an interview conducted by a credulous reporter (and childhood acquaintance);* and he repeated the disreputable content of that in a much more prominent interview in the *New Yorker*.[†] In the latter, Chomsky claimed (without invoking the term "A-over-A Principle"):

"Well, we transformationalists would say that the question 'What did John keep the car in?' is governed by a universal condition—undoubtedly a principle of universal grammar—that asserts that a noun phrase, here 'the garage,' that is part of a larger noun phrase, here 'the car in the garage,' cannot be extracted and moved."

Evidently, "we transformationalists" did not include his recent student John Ross, whose thesis had shown the "undoubted principle of universal grammar" not to hold even for English. So Chomsky, for a large nonprofessional audience, unabashedly cited as a principle of universal grammar—and implicitly as an important discovery of his own—an idea that he knew had been shown to be wrong four years earlier. Against that background, the "undoubtedly" reveals a typical, profound and massively arrogant contempt for the truth.[‡]

*See Shenker's 1971 article.

†See Metha's 1971 article, especially p. 54.

‡Compare NC's thereby revealed attitude toward his nonprofessional audience with the remarks that the 1965 Nobel Prize winner in physics, Richard Feynman, made in his 1974 Caltech commencement address, entitled "Cargo Cult Science,"

Ripping Off Others' Ideas

An especially reprehensible feature of Chomsky's linguistics is a tendency to reject proposals made by other linguists, often in the strongest terms, but then to adopt later those very proposals *without attribution or credit*. One instance involves Chomsky's belated recognition that there was actually nothing like what he called *deep structure* (later usually abbreviated "D-structure"), which, starting in 1965,* played a central role in his linguistics, as is indicated by the following quotations from his *Studies on Semantics in Generative Grammar* (1972, p. 5) and *Knowledge of Language* (1986, p. 155):

"The status of deep structure is discussed again in the third essay, where further evidence is presented leading again to the conclusion that a level of deep structure (in the sense of the standard theory and EST) *must* [emphasis added] be postulated."

"We have also considered the levels of representation determined by the interaction of their principles: D-structure, S-structure, LF and PF (phonetic form or 'surface structure')."

This role of deep structure in Chomsky's views persisted until the development of his "minimalist" program in the early 1990s, when he concluded: "Suppose that D-Structure is eliminable along these lines."† Now, there is nothing wrong with changing one's views and renouncing a concept, even a concept that has been central to one's thought for three decades. Context aside, such a development is *a priori* unexceptionable. In the case at hand, however, the fact is that other linguists had advocated the rejection of deep structure in the late 1960s; abandonment

available at http://www.physics.brocku.ca/etc/cargo_cult_science.html.

"I would like to add something that's not essential to the science, but something I kind of believe, which is that you should not fool the layman when you're talking as a scientist.... I'm talking about a specific, extra type of integrity that is not lying, but bending over backwards to show how you are maybe wrong, that you ought to have when acting as a scientist. And this is our responsibility as scientists, certainly to other scientists, and I think to laymen."

*See his 1965 *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*.

†See his 1995 work *The Minimalist Program*, p. 191.

of this concept was a defining feature of the Generative Semantics movement.*

The origin of the proposal to eliminate deep structure is well described in the literature. The idea first surfaced in a 1967 letter drafted by John Ross (published as the 1976 Lakoff and Ross article).† Chomsky was ferociously opposed to the Generative Semantics movement, and in particular he strongly *defended* the reality of deep structure—as in the two statements quoted earlier and in other assertions, like the following from 1972:‡

“Summarizing, I believe that these considerations again provide strong evidence in support of the (extended) standard theory, with its assumption that deep structures exist as a well-defined level with the properties expressed by base rules.”

Given such statements, Chomsky had an obligation to cite those who had (beyond doubt) advocated this theoretical pruning decades before he did, once he formally decided to eliminate the concept of deep structure from his theory. But he ignored this obligation. So University of California professor Geoffrey K. Pullum has written:§

“Taking this view means abandoning the cherished level of deep structure (known as ‘d-structure’ in the last two decades)... But the names of linguists like Postal, Ross and McCawley, who in the late 1960s tried to *argue* for the elimination of deep structure, are completely absent from Chomsky’s bibliography. There is no belated nod in the direction of the literature he resolutely resisted for 25 years (from 1967 to 1992; see Newmeyer (1986: I07ff., and references cited there)) but whose central thesis he now adopts.”¹¹

How serious is the uncredited adoption of others’ research

*This movement, defined by a claim that the only real properties of deep structure were properly attributed to a more abstract level of logical structure, led to an intellectual dispute extensively discussed in volumes such as those from 1986 and 1996 by Newmeyer, from 1993 by Harris, from 1995 by Huck and Goldsmith and from 1998 by Seuren.

†See Newmeyer’s 1986a study, p. 92.

‡See p. 92 of his 1972b article.

§In his 1996 review, p. 138; see also the remarks in Johnson and Lappin’s 1998 study of Chomsky’s recent ideas, p. 14n14.

ideas? Very serious, according to the investigative committee that considered Emory professor Michael Bellesiles' notorious fabrications in his study of gun ownership in America. The Emory committee wrote:

Under these "Policies and Procedures," "misconduct" includes "unethical behavior." "The commitment of fraud" in research is defined as follows: ...the intentional fabrication or falsification of research data; the omission in publications of conflicting and/or non-conforming observations of data; the theft of research methods or data from others; the plagiarizing of research ideas, research results or research publication(s); or other serious deviations "from accepted practices in carrying out or reporting results from research."*

The American Historical Association "Statement on Plagiarism and Related Misuses of the Work of Other Authors" says:

The *misuse* of the writings of another author, even when one does not borrow the exact wording, can be as unfair, as unethical, and as unprofessional as plagiarism. Such misuse includes the limited borrowing, without attribution, of another historian's distinctive and significant research findings, hypotheses, theories, rhetorical strategies, or interpretations, or an extended borrowing even with attribution.†

While neither of these formulations was directed at linguistics per se, obviously their criteria are valid for this field as well. Since Chomsky does not, either in his 1995 book or in any subsequent publication, credit any of the linguists who in the 1960s proposed the elimination of deep structure, and since it's impossible to maintain that he was unaware of this earlier work, he has clearly engaged in behavior that Emory University's investigative committee and the American Historical Association call "unfair," "unethical" and "unprofessional." Remarkably, although the latter's statement prescribes that "The real penalty for plagia-

*Emory University Report of the Investigative Committee in the Matter of Michael Bellesiles; at http://www.emory.edu/central/NEWS/Releases/Final_Report.pdf.

†Cited at <http://www.lrc.salemstate.edu/asker/plagiarism.htm>.

rism is the abhorrence of the community of scholars,” Chomsky has been able in this and other cases to appropriate others’ work with no cost to his image in the discipline of linguistics.*

Denigrating Other Fields

Despite its celebrity as a supposed major scientific development, it is hard to specify what in Chomsky’s linguistics stands as a genuine *scientific discovery* about natural language.¹² One consequence of this “result shortage” is that Chomsky has taken to denigrating, groundlessly, the results of research in other fields—hoping thereby, we believe, to disguise his own failures.

His 2002 volume *On Nature and Language* contains an introduction and a highly sympathetic interview by two long-term enthusiasts of his ideas. Yet even they appear to manifest some anxieties about the scientific status of Chomsky’s work, and they press him for “those aspects that you would consider ‘established results’ in linguistics.” Instead of adducing some results of the kind requested, the best that Chomsky can offer is:¹³

“My own view is that everything is subject to question, especially if you view it from the minimalist perspective; about everything you look at, the question is: why is it there?”

And he then immediately adds, defensively:

“If you look at the history of the sciences, this is just the usual situation. Even in the advanced sciences, everything is questionable.”

But the slightest acquaintance with modern physical science reveals this to be a falsehood that grotesquely misrepresents science’s true nature. Chomsky’s claim that all scientific understanding is provisional (“in any live discipline, you really don’t expect the body of doctrine to be terribly stable...you’ll get new perspectives, everything is in flux”) appears to be a deliberate distortion of a fundamental truth.¹⁴ Namely, every step in the development of physical theory—from the Copernican, to the

*The question inevitably arises why, in evident contrast to historians, linguists are so insouciant about the standards in their field; but this is an issue we cannot deal with here.

Keplerian, to the Newtonian, to the general-relativistic picture—represented a *generalization* accounting for new phenomena, but preserving what John Wheeler has called the “battle-tested,” secure and mathematically detailed discoveries of previous decades, which can then be seen as special cases within a more encompassing theoretical framework.¹⁵

Real sciences embody many such tremendous successes. What has changed in physics, for instance, is that knowledge broadens and deepens to include frontier domains—the very large, very small, very fast, very cold and so on. Where one stage of physical theory incorporates assumptions that prove predictively effective only within a given range, the next phase generalizes the previous model, preserving earlier results but accounting as well for new frontiers of observation. The culmination of this process in modern physics, the so-called standard theory, has given us what Joseph Lykken, of the University of Chicago and the theoretical physics group at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, has described as “a powerful theory that could explain any high-energy experiment that we threw at it”—that is, a theory that could correctly predict every experimental observation of the modern era in physics.* A comparable achievement in linguistics would have to involve a currently unimaginable theory of natural language, one that would combine with language-particular parameters to assign correct structures to any sentence in any human language.

There would certainly be nothing intellectually disgraceful in conceding that compared with physics as it has evolved over centuries, theoretical linguistics is a young science, scarcely fifty years old, that cannot hope to match the achievements of the former. But this is not what Chomsky is saying; rather, he clearly wishes his readers to believe that results in physics are no more robust than those in his own field.

Chomsky’s efforts to promote this exceptionally distorted equivalence emerge clearly in this claim from *On Nature and Language* (p. 154):

“On the other hand, if you ask for an axiomatic system [in

*See his 2002 article discussion, p. 56.

linguistic theory], there is no such thing, *but then you can't do it for any other science either.*" (emphasis added)¹⁶

But the last clause of this statement is a breathtaking absurdity. As theoretical physicist Franz Mandl has shown, virtually the entire theoretical content of classical quantum mechanics is typically stated in the form of six axioms identifying properties of the universe at the extreme microlevel with certain mathematical expressions.* From these six axioms, virtually all the core results of modern fundamental physics follow, given the specification of certain system-specific parameters such as the potential of the relevant force. The specific quantitative values of the (discrete) energy states of the hydrogen atom, the existence of "virtual" particles, and the simultaneous immeasurability of certain physical observables are only three of the many concrete, predictively exact and experimentally massively confirmed results of the axiomatic formalism of quantum mechanics.

In this final phase of his career, then, it appears that Chomsky can do no better in justifying the value of his linguistic work than to argue, at least implicitly, that the natural sciences themselves, like his largely result-free linguistics, have made nothing like secure progress, that at most they offer "bodies of doctrine" and raise significant questions. This irresponsible distortion is yet another proper measure of his intellectual corruption.¹⁷

*See Mandl's 1957 volume.

NOTES

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¹ An aspect of this is a frequent resort to what can only be called play-acting at science, as in the remarks on page 8 of Chomsky's 1981b article:

“The telephone exchange, for example, has ‘heard’ much more English than any of us, but lacking the principles of universal grammar (inter alia) it develops no grammar of English as part of its internal structure.”

This comment, intended to support Chomsky's posit of an innate faculty of language, is saved from utter falsehood only by the scare quotes on “heard,” which only weakly disguise the fact that the telephone exchange, an inanimate object with no sense of hearing, has heard no English at all. But the assumptions of the quotation cannot support hypothesizing an innate faculty of language as against claiming that language learning depends on general human intelligence—telephone exchanges lacking the latter no less than any putative faculty of language.

Similar play-acting in support of his innateness view is found on pages 50–51 of Chomsky's slim 2000 volume, which claims, absurdly, that denial of the innateness of language is equivalent to denial of any difference between his granddaughter, a rock and a rabbit.

² Chomsky's entire foundational view of linguistics is incoherent as he repeatedly identifies language with a mental organ, a “faculty of

language,” and yet also claims that it is *infinite*; see e.g. pages 3 and 8 of his year 2000 monograph; and for criticism see the 1991 article by Katz and Postal, and the works from 2003 and 2004 by Postal. But any aspect of any organ is perforce finite, limited both in space and time.

³ The last quality appears in Flint’s 1995 quotation from Steven Pinker referring to him as “an out-and-out bully,” and MacFarquhar’s 2003 description (pages 64–67) of Chomsky’s bullying of *students* in one of his own classes (which she attended). Page 134 of Huck and Goldsmith’s 1995 volume describes a historically relevant instance of Chomsky’s bullying of a then recent student and junior colleague. And de Beaugrande observes: “The irrationality of Chomsky’s programme is most visibly betrayed by the veritable thesaurus of belittlements he has bestowed upon rival academics and scientists or their work,” before listing several dozen such belittlements.

⁴ Poole’s 2002 notice of Chomsky’s 2002 work touches on this point: “It seems, of late, that Chomsky has been publishing a new book every couple of weeks; but most of the ‘Chomsky books’ that appear now are made up of transcribed interviews, rather than newly composed prose.”

The result of unconstrained, unrefereed pronouncements is seen in remarks like the following from a BBC interview (circa 1996):

“CHOMSKY: You could put it that way, but I would also say that there was a shift with regard to finding the rules of language at all. Traditional linguistics did not *try* [emphasis added] to find the rules of language. It thought it was doing it but as soon as you took a close look at what was happening, you saw that it wasn’t really doing it at all, it was just giving a certain amount of information which could be used by somebody who already tacitly knew the rules of language, to sort of add in the rest.”

Here Chomsky goes beyond denying that traditional linguistics (or philology) failed to *find* the rules of language—a defensible claim—to assert that it didn’t even *attempt* to do so. But consultation of any standard traditional grammar shows this self-serving declaration to be absurd. Consider e.g. George O. Curme’s well-known 1922 volume on German: page 456 gives a rule to the effect that subjects of a finite verb are in the nominative case; page 458 states that usually nonomissable subjects are omitted “as a rule” in imperatives; page 468 indicates that predicates agree with the subject in number, and where possible in person, gender and case; and page 587 begins a characterization of rules for word order. To suggest that scholars such as Curme were not even trying to find linguistic rules (although suffering from the delusion that they were so trying) is thus irresponsible pretense. But just this sort of non-

sense goes entirely unchallenged, not only in this particular interview but in many others, equally unrefereed.

- ⁵ Compare e.g. the nonlinguistic fantasy in (i) quoted in Flint's 1995 interview with the linguistic make-believe in (ii) from page 29 of Chomsky's 2000 monograph:

(i) "Intellectual life is mostly a racket," Chomsky says today. "That's not so much true of the sciences, which is why I like it at MIT: Nature keeps you honest. But a good deal of intellectual life is corrupt and profoundly dishonest and almost has to be. The academic world is made up of parasitic institutions that survive on outside corporate support, so if people get out of line, there's going to be trouble."

Chomsky here slanders untold thousands of people as corrupt without a hint of evidence, justification or rationality. The truth of (i) should, given his multitudinous criticisms of the corporate world, have led to a career of repeated "trouble" rather than the richly rewarded affair (awarded his university's highest rank) it has been.

(ii) "However, increasingly it is being found that these differences are superficial; that is, Chinese with no inflections and Sanskrit with a lot of inflections seem to be very similar, perhaps identical apart from peripheral lexical features. If so, then for the mind, they're the same. They differ only in the way in which the sensorimotor system accesses the uniform derivation. They all have the cases and agreement and everything else, even richer than Sanskrit; but only the mind sees them."

Although (ii) deems it a scientifically determined fact that Chinese, English, Sanskrit, etc. all have uniform derivations in terms of cases, agreement and "everything else," this broad and deep claim is advanced without evidence or references. This absence is hardly accidental, since (ii) lacks any scientific grounding whatsoever.

- ⁶ Four of many examples:

(i) Donald (circa 1994): "I have reproduced this work by Chomsky and Herman to show that nothing Chomsky says can be believed, and to illustrate his methods of deceiving his readers."

(ii) Horowitz (2001): "It would be more accurate to say of the Chomsky *oeuvre*...that everything he has written is a lie, including the 'ands' and 'thes.'"

(iii) Delong (2002): "And then there are Chomsky's casual lies."

(iv) Windschuttle (2003): "He has defined the responsibility of the intellectual as the pursuit of truth and the exposure of lies, but has supported the regimes he admires by suppressing the truth and perpetrating falsehoods."

- ⁷ See Postal and Pullum's 1997 notice, which documents Chomsky's

self-serving misrepresentation to an uncritical biographer of the history of his own department, and Harris's 1998 volume.

- ⁸ Additional grave factual errors mar Chomsky's 1957 account of the passive voice, specifically, his repeated claims (pages 42 and 43) that a passive verb cannot occur directly before a noun phrase. This overlooking of double object cases is falsified by e.g. *Melvin was sent a prospectus by Jane. / The message was just handed him by Jane.*
- ⁹ We avoid speculating on motivations; but the falsehood made Chomsky's view of the passive seem more general than his earlier work noted it was, contributing (minutely) to ameliorating the status of his then novel transformational conception of syntax.
- ¹⁰ Relevant post-1967 claims by Chomsky about the A-over-A Principle are found in his works of 1971, pages 29–30; 1977, page 85; 1980, page 4; 1981a, page 212; 1982, page 62; 1986a, page 71; 1986b, page 17; 2002, pages 129–30; and in the 1977 article by Chomsky and Lasnik, pages 429, 446. There are also similar statements by Chomsky in Mehta's 1971 partial interview article, page 54; in Shenker's 1971 article, page 107; and in Haley and Lunsford's 1994 interview-based monograph, page 135.
- ¹¹ Recognition of a tendency in Chomsky's work to incorporate other people's ideas without adequate crediting is thus hardly novel here. See also Harris's thorough 1993 historical study, pages 254–56.
- ¹² Chomsky's own output supports this possibly shocking claim. When interviewers occasionally have prompted him to specify his actual scientific results, he consistently (see below) has avoided making any checkable commitments; see for example his reactions in his 1984 volume, page 401, and his more recent 2002 monograph, pages 151–55. Even former enthusiasts for Chomsky's linguistics have recently expressed qualms, notably Newmeyer in his 2003 review, on page 6, where one reads: "As far as *ONL* is concerned, one is left with the feeling that Chomsky's ever-increasingly triumphalist rhetoric is inversely proportional to the actual empirical results that he can point to." (Here "*ONL*" denotes Chomsky's 2002 volume: *REL/PMP*.) It is also notable that the freely chosen linguistic topics that Chomsky cites in the innumerable interviews he has granted in recent decades *never* include a list of putative scientific results.

Chomsky's lack of results is surely related to his indulgence in bluffing of the sort discussed in section 3. If he could cite actual results, why would he need to engage in such pretense?

Denial of scientific results is not equivalent to a claim that Chomsky's work on language is devoid of all elements of the broader, vaguer and weaker category of *accomplishments*, though

conclusions about those are controversial and well beyond the limits of these remarks.

¹³ See Chomsky's 2002 monograph, page 151. Evidently unsatisfied with the response we have quoted, the interviewers tried again (pages 153–54), but once more could not elicit commitment to any result.

¹⁴ The alternative to the “deliberate distortion” view is that Chomsky is so profoundly incompetent in physical science that he actually believes this absurd claim. But even if he were sufficiently ignorant of the status and history of science, that still wouldn't constitute a defense against the charge of deceptiveness. For he could hardly be so clueless as to be *unaware of that ignorance*. For instance, when, like the present authors, one knows nothing about Egyptian hieroglyphics, how can one fail to be aware of that ignorance? So either Chomsky knew that what he was saying was radically false, or he knew that he was so ungrounded in the domain in question as to disqualify him from commenting on it publicly. Either way, his remarks represent a blatant lack of honesty.

¹⁵ The realm of secure results in classical physics is so enormous that it would be impractical to give the reader more than some key references as *entrées* into that realm. For classical mechanics, Goldstein's 1980 work is widely regarded as the standard guide to advanced mechanics, including the special-relativistic extensions to the Newtonian picture. It provides clear introductions to the advanced mathematical formalisms, including tensors and matrices, which play such a crucial role in general relativity and quantum theory. Similar ground is covered, from a rather different perspective, in Konopinski's 1969 volume. The foundations of electromagnetism, including the special-relativistic generalization, is well covered in the Lorrain and Corson 1970 study. All these volumes are widely used as textbooks, even after the passage of decades, which abundantly illustrates the durability of the results that classical physics has obtained—contrary to Chomsky's unfounded comments cited earlier.

Turning to more modern physics, the picture doesn't change. Quantum theory is typically introduced via two separate routes: (i) by an extension of the classical theory of waves that conforms to the requirement that a wave function be highly localizable, as in, e.g., Gasiorwicz's 1974 volume; or (ii) by introduction of the quantum axioms at the outset, an approach pursued at a basic level in, e.g., Sherwin's 1959 introduction, and at a more sophisticated but still accessible level in the 1973 work by Gillespie. A much more technical discussion is in the 1967 work by Sakurai; see also the Hughes 1989 text.

¹⁶ Despite expressing no doubts over the first part of this statement, Chomsky's pliant interviewers had earlier asserted (page 4):

(i) "The new models built on the basis of this insight quickly permitted analyses with non-trivial deductive depth and which, thanks to their degree of formal explicitness, could make precise predictions and hence could be submitted to various kinds of empirical testing."

This passage is largely empty bluff, instancing Chomsky's ability to induce others to accept his self-serving pretense. There are no references to the supposed analyses with non-trivial deductive depth, and no justification for claims of a high degree of formal explicitness, notably lacking in Chomsky's work for decades. He has, moreover, sometimes suggested that formalization is not currently recommended, as on page 28 of Chomsky's 1982 interview volume, or by explicit doubts about its importance, as on page 146 of his 1990 response article in a linguistic journal.

Further, the *internal* inconsistency is remarkable. While on page 154 of his 2002 monograph Chomsky tells the interviewers *he cannot supply an axiom system*, they, in effect speaking for him, claim in (i) that his work yields analyses with "non-trivial deductive depth," terminology he has himself used; see page 15 of his 1980 journal article. But the initial lines of standard deductions consist precisely of axioms. So here one finds the incoherent make-believe of supposed non-trivial explanatory deductions coexisting with the (openly admitted) nonexistence of any axiomatic system or other formalized inference framework that could ground them.

¹⁷ A claim that other fields also lack enduring results of the sort missing from (Chomsky's) linguistics is even *less* true for the formal sciences like mathematics and logic, fields whose luminous achievements Chomsky, notably, rarely mentions. Such domains of study have yielded, and continue to yield, unshakable conclusions, some dating to antiquity, some more recent, such as Kurt Gödel's epoch-making incompleteness results or Andrew Wiles' 1994 proof of Fermat's Last Theorem (sought by mathematicians for some 350 years); see works for the general reader like Davis and Hersh's 1981 volume to appreciate these achievements. Comparison of the standards in Chomsky's linguistic writings with those taken for granted in formal fields reveals such a deep inferiority of the former as to make obvious the hopelessness of any defense of his linguistics via the denigration of other fields.

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NINE

CHOMSKY, LANGUAGE, WORLD WAR II AND ME

John Williamson

Noam Chomsky introduced the world to some new and fascinating concepts. He taught us that structures can “transform,” words can “move” and affixes can “hop.” Invisible elements such as “trace,” “empty spaces” and “PRO” were invented in order to explain the ways in which language holds itself together. The strange notion of “deep structure” led to the appealing idea of “universal grammar,” and that in turn led to the theory of a “biological basis of grammar”—the idea that grammar is hardwired into the brain. All of these ideas exist as dazzling variations on the same theme.

Indeed, it would be unfair in the extreme not to give him his due. For his opening act, he made one critically important contribution to linguistics: he rejected the behaviorist philosophy of B. F. Skinner and called instead for the restoration of a rationalistic approach to the study of linguistics. From that point on, and for a couple of decades at least, the world marveled at the dazzlingly creative tools, the new terminology, the startling concepts.

And here we are, fifty years after the revolution began. Immense progress has been made in almost every field of science. We have been to the moon several times. Our way of life depends on the computer chip. And yet when it comes to Chomskyan linguistics, Howard Lasnik, a serious and respected

scholar at the University of Connecticut, admits that the grammatical formulation of the following “second order of difficulty” sentence is a huge mystery: *For there to be a snowstorm would be nice.*

No doubt it is a mystery, for all that Chomskyan grammar can fully explain is that which is grammatically transparent and easily labeled: “first-order” sentences such as *The keeper fed the bananas to the monkey.*

Isn't the measure of a theory's value not how clever it is, but the difficulty of the problems it can solve? Einstein, to whom Chomsky is sometimes compared, conceived of a general theory of relativity that is valued not for its novelty, but for the many physical phenomena it explains. Einstein's theories have stood the test of time because the insights were correct. Can the same be said of Chomsky's?

The history of Chomskyan theory is a study in cycles. He announces a new and exciting idea, which adherents to the faith then use and begin to make all kinds of headway. But this progress is invariably followed by complications, then by contradictions, then by a flurry of patchwork fixes, then by a slow unraveling, and finally by stagnation. Eventually the master announces a new approach and the cycle starts anew. Thus we go from “transformational grammar and deep structure” to “universal grammar” to “principles and parameters” to “minimalism” to...what next? To a point where Chomskyan theory has no rational means of explaining why the following sentences are ungrammatical:

- ◆ John was decided to leave early.
- ◆ It seems John to be intelligent.

In his latest work, *The Minimalist Program* (1995), Chomsky is reduced to trying to explain language in simple iconic terms that read as though they were taken straight from a manual for desktop publishing software: simple, user-friendly instructions such as MERGE, COPY and MOVE. Perhaps the inspiration for this latest theoretical incarnation is that everyone can speak a language and anyone can do desktop publishing; therefore what works for one will work for the other.

There seems, by the way, to be something of a faddish ten-

dency among some linguists to attribute physical properties to the elements of language, applying terms from the realm of hard science such as physics or chemistry. I have seen Chomsky and his followers employ such concepts as “light” and “heavy” phrases or “weak” and “strong” attraction between words— attempts to explain the behavior of verbs or adjectives in terms you might use for subatomic particles. This penchant for appropriating concepts from other sciences is evidenced in various ways:

- ◆ The deep structure/surface structure dichotomy seems like a spin on input/output or programming code/screen image of computer science.
- ◆ Transformational grammar is similar, perhaps, to the chemical sequencing of biochemistry.
- ◆ “Principles and parameters” could be a spin on global computer settings.
- ◆ The unfathomable “faculty of language” (FL), capable of generating all possible sentences, lurks in the background like a mysterious “black box.”

Despite the fads, however, the grammar of sentences of a “third order of difficulty” such as *Had there but seemed some hope, how tough it would have been not to go on* are now seen as far beyond Chomsky’s reach. A “fourth order of difficulty” sentence, such as *Had’st thou not been my father, these white flakes had challenged pity of thee* from *King Lear*, he would not even attempt to grapple with. *The Minimalist Program* does not deal with examples that rise above the second order of difficulty. And so what happened to the Chomskyan revolution?

I suppose that I should stop here and comment on why I am discussing Chomskyan linguistics when in fact I have never taught it nor even studied it formally, and why I found myself locked in an adversarial relationship with Noam Chomsky himself.

To begin with, I should say that I’m no right-winger. I am one of a relative handful of graduates of the Virginia Military Institute who believed that the battle to deny admission to women was a travesty. I have been a member of the ACLU, and I believe that people should be able to study and work wherever

they want, in whatever field, and worship how they want, and marry whom they choose. I liked the Kennedys and Clinton; then again, I liked Ronald Reagan and I like George W. Bush. I believe that we need journalists and intellectuals capable of incisive criticism of our government and the actions of its officials; Christopher Hitchens comes to mind as a valuable contributor to the national conversation.

I have always had an interest in languages and history. As for modern theoretical linguistics, I always considered it daunting, with its indecipherable symbolism, mumbo-jumbo jargon and algebraic formulae. Until recently, I didn't know much at all about Chomsky.

But a couple of years ago, on a whim, I picked up a popular introductory book on linguistics. I had fun working on the problems and I bought more books. Occasionally I would come up with my own solutions to unsolved problems and send them to various authors, including, on one occasion, Chomsky himself. In many—OK, most—cases I either didn't fully understand the problem or didn't frame the solution in the "proper theoretical framework," which usually meant the Chomskyan framework. Most people humored me for a while and then told me, in a very nice way, to buzz off.

But not everybody. Some gave consideration to my solutions, and over time I came to understand the problems better and began, working by myself, to attack a number of longstanding and oft-mentioned problems of interest both to linguists and to ordinary people who are fascinated by language.

Then came the invasion of Iraq. My interest in Chomsky quickened somewhat when he was interviewed in the *New Yorker* early in 2003 by Larissa MacFarquhar and was quoted as saying, in front of an MIT class, that in World War II the Americans gave support to military units under Hitler's control, thus slowing down the Soviet liberation of the concentration camps in Poland:

Well, we've learned from the Russian archives that Britain and the U.S. then began supporting armies established by Hitler to hold back the Russian advance. Tens of thousands were killed. Suppose you're sitting in Auschwitz. Do you want the Russian troops to be held back?

What a preposterous, astonishing, jaw-dropping lie that was! And yet neither Ms. MacFarquhar nor anyone else seemed to be questioning it. I wrote Chomsky a long e-mail on April 29, 2003, explaining the extreme unlikelihood of his claim and challenging him to supply details: “What were the American units that participated? Which German units received these air drops, what armaments were dropped, and which Russian units suffered as a result of this resupply?”

On May 1, 2003, he responded in two ways: first by saying that MacFarquhar had manufactured all of the statements attributed to him on this subject; and then by referring me to an obscure source that he said would support the claim which he said he hadn’t made. It seemed odd, but I went along with it.

The source he claimed would prove the truthfulness of his nonassertion, Jeffrey Burds’ *The Early Cold War in Soviet West Ukraine, 1944–1948*, in fact proved no such thing.* This was particularly surprising since Chomsky is listed on page 2 as a draft reader.

There is an early reference to an “independent, highly clandestine, nationalist guerrilla force in West Ukraine” that “managed to tie down at least two hundred thousand Red Army troops...in 1944–1945.”† This may sound like a lot of troops, but it constituted only about 7 percent of the total manpower of the Soviet armies approaching the concentration camps in Germany and Poland, so their liberation was not affected in the slightest by what amounted to a minor diversion. In any case, no American forces were involved. Then Burds refers to U.S. government support of thousands of anti-Soviet Ukrainian rebels in Galicia *by the late 1940s*—long after the war was over and the camps were liberated.‡

The Hitler-supported division that Chomsky refers to can only be the well-known Galicia Division, composed of Ukrainian troops led by German officers, which was sent to fight in the

*The Carl Beck Papers no. 1505, January 2001, Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh.

†Ibid., p. 8.

‡Ibid., p. 17.

Battle of Brody, near Lvov in Belorussia, where it was encircled and annihilated by the Soviet army on July 27, 1944—six months before the liberation of Auschwitz.

Chomsky wrote to me on August 31, 2003, after I pointed all this out to him: “I accurately quoted two statements of his [Burds’], and put in a tentative comment of my own drawing the obvious conclusion from them, carefully understating the point, (‘apparently’).” Thus, it was “apparent” to Chomsky that a Wehrmacht unit destroyed in 1944 was somehow instrumental in slowing down the liberation of the camps in 1945, and that American anti-Soviet activities after the end of the war somehow influenced events that occurred during the war.

As for his parallel denials that he never said any of this to begin with, here’s what he wrote me about Larissa MacFarquhar and her piece in the *New Yorker* on July 30, 2003:

...too ridiculous to merit comment...No one can seriously use this as a source...childish diatribes in journals attempting to discredit political enemies...an attempt to discredit a hated political enemy...I had nothing to do with it.... Their standards make them almost unusable.... almost all gossip...a ridiculous gossip column in the *New Yorker*...”

In the weeks following publication of the profile, I kept looking for a letter from Chomsky in the *New Yorker* demanding a correction. This whole affair was beginning to have an aroma about it. So I contacted the reporter and asked her to confirm the accuracy of her quotations. She replied:

Message-ID: <76.30c518c1.2c6c778f@aol.com>

Date: Thu, 14 Aug 2003 01:26:39 EDT

Subject: Re: The Chomsky profile in the New Yorker, March 31, 2003

Dear Mr. Williamson,

I’m sorry that you should wonder whether I made up quotes, though I don’t blame you—Chomsky can be very persuasive. I did not. But you don’t need to take my word for it: the politics class that I attended and from which I quote in the article was recorded on videotape by MIT. I obtained a copy of the videotape from Natasha Freidus at Creative Narrations, www.creativenarrations.net, (617) 623-8995. She may be able to supply you with one if you

care to pursue it. The rest of the interviews were recorded by me on regular audiotapes. And the whole article was gone over with Chomsky himself by fact checkers at the magazine.

Sincerely, Larissa MacFarquhar, *The New Yorker*

She was right. MIT had it all on tape, and you could watch it on the Internet and hear him say every word, clear as day. For reasons that are incomprehensible to me, Mr. Chomsky was lying about what he had said.

Now keep in mind that this man regards himself as the leader of a political movement, even more than as a linguist of Einsteinian caliber. In general, such people are not lacking in courage: Gandhi went to jail at the drop of a hat; Martin Luther King Jr. was willing to get smacked around by racists; Nelson Mandela spent nearly thirty years in prison. And Chomsky? He can't even own up to what he taught in a classroom. He won't say, "Yes, I said it. What of it?" or "Yes, I said it and I'll defend my claim." Instead, he hides behind the skirts of Ms. MacFarquhar, libeling a woman who did nothing more than accurately report his words.

It was a Wizard of Oz moment for me: the mighty fire-breathing Wizard was just a pathetic little figure behind the curtain.

Chomsky to me (August 27, 2003): "It is absurd to quote statements from a class discussion, or to rely on a source that stoops to that."

Me to Chomsky (October 11, 2004): "So let's see if we've got this straight: when a student listens to you in a classroom setting, the student should not expect your comments to have any educational value. Well, I'm sure that there are millions of people around the country who would support that notion, but I never expected you to freely admit it. You constantly surprise."

At this point you might be wondering what the big deal is. You may even be dismissing the whole thing by saying to yourself that no reasonable person would ever pay attention to Chomsky's political speeches and writings. But that is not altogether true. Reasonable people want to be fair-minded; when they hear Chomsky's statements and don't have any experience

dealing with him and don't know enough themselves to counter his assertions, and when they take into account his towering reputation, they think that the reasonable thing is to believe him.

Imagine, then, how much more powerful his effect must be on those unreasonable people who wish us ill, bearing in mind that such people do not simply rebuke us for our opinions. They are capable of flying jet planes into our office buildings. They do so for essentially intellectual reasons, and Chomsky, by lending them intellectual standing, gives credence to their views.

And so, on the brink of a war to liberate Iraq, in the middle of a war on terrorism, Chomsky tells the *New Yorker*—and the world—that America is so evil that in the Second World War we consorted with Hitler, betrayed our Soviet ally, and added to the toll in the death camps. Those who sought to destroy America no doubt took careful note.

Chomsky and I debated these issues for months, sending many e-mails back and forth. In this odd correspondence, I learned some even more amazing things about the role of the United States in World War II, about our war planning, our strategies and the disposition of our forces. On June 30, 2003, Chomsky told me that “the primary war the U.S. fought was against Japan.” But George Marshall biographer Forrest Pogue writes that, on the contrary, “the Allies agreed that their overall objective was the defeat of Germany.” Similarly, historian Ronald Spector asserts that “the president and the American chiefs of staff reaffirmed their commitment to the ‘Germany First’ strategy.”

A month later, on July 30, I learned how dark our motives were in providing support to the Soviet Union: “The US wanted Russia to keep bearing the vast brunt of the war with the Germans, and so provided it with supplies.” This despite Stalin's stated admission, as quoted by the historian Richard Overy: “Without Allied aid, we would not have been able to cope.”

In this same e-mail, Chomsky informed me that by D-day in Normandy, “the Nazis [were] pretty much defeated by the Russians. Otherwise the Americans and British could not have landed.... On D-day, US forces entered Europe proper, after the Russians had beaten back the Nazi assault, at huge cost.” This

despite the scholarly consensus, as stated by historian Victor Davis Hanson, that

in fall 1944 the number of Allied and German combatants in Europe was still roughly equal.... Among the German defenders there had been at least thirty infantry divisions of the highest quality to defend the Normandy beaches.... Despite horrendous dislocations caused by bombing and staggering battlefield losses, the Germans [in 1944] were fielding armies and equipment at rates unmatched in the past.... German industrial potential and manpower reserves before late 1944 had not been fully tapped.

I was astonished at how little of what Chomsky said actually correlated with the facts. I sent him arguments, explanations, facts, figures, quotations, anything I could come up with to make my point. He dismissed it all. No fact outweighed his opinion; no historical resource, no matter how impeccable, could shake his *idée fixe*.

Always arguing for personal vindication, Chomsky would claim that he was misinterpreted; he would fabricate facts; he would claim that I fabricated facts; he would disparage any documented source used against him; he would take my argument and claim it for his own; he would attribute his own failed argument to me.

Through e-mail after e-mail, Chomsky vociferously defended his erroneous statements. Finally, on August 26, 2003, it got to the point where I said:

I think the biggest disadvantage you have had in all of this is that you are relying for your argument almost exclusively on ideological considerations, whereas I have in front of me a half-dozen or so standard reference works which you may not be aware of, and so it has been a bit of an “unfair fight” for you, and I will be the first to admit that.

In fact, I will give you credit where credit is due: in all of your statements regarding the Second World War, whether talking about the role and activities of the U.S., the role of the Soviet Union, Germany, Ukraine, the Far East—every single statement you made and I mean without exception was proven to be factually insupportable. Now that’s consistency.

I suppose that he then trudged over to the MIT library and had the librarian help him find a book on World War II. He got himself a pretty good book and sent me a single quotation.

Chomsky to me on August 31, 2003: "Try any standard history, e.g., Calvocoressi and Wint: 'The battles for the Kursk salient cost Hitler half a million men and when they [the Germans] failed all possibility of avoiding total defeat had gone.'"*

This statement, from *Total War* by the above-named authors, supported one of Chomsky's pet arguments: that the Soviet role in the European theater of operations was the decisive one, and that the Allied role was minor. And yet, as I pointed out to him on October 11, 2003, in the same volume we find the authors referring to "the actual participation of the United States in the war in Europe and the hugeness of its contribution to the victory," and also acknowledging "the unforeseen capacity of the Americans to fight, uniquely, a war in every quarter of the world..."†

There were facts enough in the Calvocoressi and Wint volume to refute every argument Chomsky had made. I was willing to continue with this absurdist theater, but he just quit and walked away.

As our correspondence was proceeding, I decided to take another look at Chomskyan linguistics. After all, his reputation as a political thinker rests largely on his reputation as a theorist of language and a cognitive scientist. If it were not for this reputation, his political views would be held in no higher regard than those of former presidential candidate Lyndon Larouche, who used to claim that the queen of England was the head of an international drug ring.

And so I pored over his first major work, *The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory* (LSLT), as well as his last major work, *The Minimalist Program*.

I have already mentioned how Chomsky led the revolution against behaviorism and toward rationalism in linguistics. It

*Peter Calvocoressi and Guy Wint, *Total War: The Story of World War II* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 501.

†*Ibid.*, pp. 206, 224.

seems to me, however, that having made this valuable contribution, he turned right around and did something that guaranteed decades of frustration and failure. Inexplicably, and with absolutely no scientific justification, after embracing rationalism Chomsky then rejected the idea that meaning and literary considerations are to be included as components worthy of linguistic study. From that point on, all of his theories seem to have been predicated upon the notion: “Assume that the components of meaning are unworthy of the study of linguistics....”

Words and structures were to be viewed only functionally. To give an example, consider this simple, first-order-of-difficulty sentence: *George is happy*. The verb “is” is labeled a verb phrase (VP) and is slotted between the noun and the adjective; that’s all Chomsky would want to say about the verb in that sentence. He would never consider such questions as:

- ◆ How can a noun (George) be an adjective (happy)?
- ◆ In what sense can an animate object be an abstract quality?
- ◆ What does the sentence really mean if you look at the meaning of its components?

Chomsky never asks such questions because he believes that once he is able to label all the components of language properly, then the veil will be lifted and all will be made clear. In other words, a highly refined labeling system will take the place of insight. But as the very simple example above shows, when it comes to language, you may ignore seemingly extraneous considerations if you like, but you do so at your peril.

Indeed, Chomsky went so far in the direction of putting the theory ahead of the language that he literally discarded those facts that didn’t meet the terms of his theory. I saw this tendency in a small-print footnote in LSLT, where he says:

We have not troubled to make the distinction between “not” and “n’t.”...We will disregard this distinction, and rule out [as grammatical English] “can I not see it,” etc.*

Me to Chomsky on June 27, 2003: “Amazing how you can just ‘rule out’ a legitimate grammatical structure of the English

**The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory*, p. 441n.

language. Too bad Shakespeare didn't know about your rule when he wrote this: 'Pray *can I not*, though inclination be as sharp as will.' (*Hamlet*, Act III, Scene iii.) Again, I ask the question: Isn't 'troubling to make the distinction' what linguistics is all about? Haven't you ever had a student who disrupted your class and you turned to him or her and said: *Can you not do that, please?* And would that question be the same as: *Can't you do that, please?* Would those sentences be interpreted and understood as meaning the same thing? I thinkn't."

Permit me to get a bit technical at this point. An example that Chomsky relates in support of this issue is the phrase *the shooting of the hunters*. He first claimed in his 1950s-era *Logical Structure* that the natural interpretation of that phrase is transitive (that someone was firing at, and wounding, the hunters), not intransitive (that the hunters were doing the shooting, with no target specified). The distinguished professor of linguistics Frederick Newmeyer puzzled over the very same claim as recently as his 2003 presidential address before the Linguistics Society of America.

When I asked Chomsky about this, he told me, in an August 12, 2003, e-mail, that there is an overwhelming preference in language for transitive (Vt) verbs in the gerundive construction as opposed to intransitive (Vi): "It is so hard to find relatively realistic cases in which the structural ambiguity is not dismissed in usage because the Vi interpretation is so weird or pragmatically difficult...rare...or outlandish.... It raises the question how we even know that there is a structural ambiguity, given that plausible cases are so rare."

This "rarity" of Vi types served as evidence to Chomsky that the brain had preferences for certain grammatical structures. This in turn was evidence that grammar is innate, or built into the brain.

A week later, I sent him numerous examples of intransitive verbs that were perfectly suited to a gerundive construction, and showed him that, while his brain may have seen things differently, my brain had no difficulty with them at all. In the following phrases, both the Vt and the Vi interpretations are quite natural:

Transitive: The shooting of the hunters was quite tragic.

Intransitive: The shooting of the hunters was the best they had done all week.

Transitive: The ringing of the bells tired us out.

Intransitive: The ringing of the bells kept us awake.

Transitive: The sinking of the ships was carried out by a submarine fleet.

Intransitive: The sinking of the ships began slowly and then they were gone.

On the other hand, in the following examples it is the *intransitive* that is quite natural and the *transitive* that is either highly contrived, pragmatically rejected or impossible:

Intransitive: The cooking of the chefs surprised us for its originality.

Transitive: ?The cooking of the chefs was pure cannibalism. (outlandish)

Intransitive: The hammering of the woodpecker kept us awake.

Transitive: ?The hammering of the woodpecker was painful to watch. (outlandish)

Intransitive: The booing of the audience alarmed the actors.

Transitive: ?The booing of the audience was something actors had never done before. (outlandish)

Intransitive: The hissing of the snakes warned us of the danger.

Transitive: ?The hissing of the snakes did not scare off the snakes; it just made them bolder. (outlandish)

Intransitive: The charging of the bulls was awesome to behold.

Transitive: ?The charging of the bulls ruined their credit. (outlandish)

Intransitive: The falling of the leaves was an unexpected pleasure.

Transitive: (impossible)*

Chomsky to me on August 27, 2003: "There is no issue about commonplace character of Vi, or outlandish constructions with Vt."

Me to Chomsky on October 11, 2003: "Really? There isn't? That's funny. There was an issue on August 12, there was coun-

*I would like to thank the girls of Hooters at the Jefferson Davis Turnpike location south of Richmond for helping me to compile this list.

terevidence presented on August 19, and on August 27 suddenly there wasn't an issue any more!"

Chomsky to me on August 27: "The problems are two: (1) what is the general system of recursive operations (the I-language) from which these and infinitely many other facts derive, and (2) why is the very rare, pragmatically outlandish interpretation of the Vi gerundive instantly understood, particularly when the rules are much more complex than for the Vt interpretation."

Me to Chomsky: "This doesn't help at all. In fact, it makes things worse. Earlier you asked, 'Since the Vi interpretation of the gerundive is so rare, and pragmatically so outlandish usually, why do we even know that it is a possible interpretation?' But now you ask: 'Why is the very rare, pragmatically outlandish interpretation of the Vi gerundive instantly understood?' Well, which is it? ... You must know that you can't have it both ways: either it's instantly interpretable or it isn't. It can't be both. [This] strikes me as another one of these problems-that-aren't-really-problems that you seem to specialize in and get so much mileage out of. Of course, you also have the rather glaring logical inconsistency staring you in the face, in that...you ask what the rules of the general system are, and [yet now] you claim that the rules for the Vi interpretation are 'much more complex' than the rules for the interpretation of the Vt. Oh, really? And how would you know that to be true, when...you haven't even worked out what the rules are? This is like claiming that Dutch is more difficult to learn than is Afrikaans, when you've studied neither."

Chomsky to me on October 13, 2003: "During the summer, I was willing to take the time to sort through your diatribes, tantrums, and impressive deluge of insults to locate the substantive statements scattered throughout. I tried to answer these completely and conscientiously. I think I've more than fulfilled my responsibilities in this regard. With the fall underway...there is too much else to do. That requires [me to] raise the bar of seriousness. I am sure that you can locate others to harass concerning these topics. I'm afraid I cannot cooperate any longer."

I was left with the problem of facts. Whether you're talking about American military units, concentration camps in Poland,

or English verbs, you always have to account for the facts. But Chomsky's approach to linguistics shares much with his approach to history: if the facts get in the way of the theory, too bad for the facts.

There is an old joke about the man who was observed underneath a street lamp as he was bending over and looking for something. When the cop asked him what he was doing the man replied, "I'm looking for my wallet."

"What makes you think you lost it here?"

"I didn't; I lost it in the alley over yonder."

"So why are you looking for it here?"

"The light is better here."

And so it is with Noam Chomsky. He spends his time looking where the light is better, where snappy solutions and catchy buzzwords will resonate with a fascinated public. He has no intention of wandering into the dark catacombs of semantics, because they are endlessly vast and labyrinthine, with no clear signposts marking the way.



A final note: In 1991 the United States went to war against Iraq, expelling Saddam's troops from Kuwait. We stopped short of liberating the Iraqis, but restored the status quo and protected the flow of oil. President George H. W. Bush blundered tragically by encouraging dissidents to rise up, and they did so, fully expecting that the U.S. would support them. But help never came, and thousands were killed. These actions gave ammunition to those who denounced America as being concerned only with its own interests.

In late 2002, President George W. Bush decided to finish the job. It would have been fully arguable that, weapons of mass destruction or no, we owed the people of Iraq their liberation. To have done something that was in their best interests, not just ours, would have been morally justifiable, and the world ought to have approved. Yet Chomsky did everything he could to get the world to stop the 2003 invasion.

On December 12, 2003, the day that Saddam was captured,

I wrote to Chomsky: "It was only a year ago that you were standing before the adoring crowds, telling the world that America's invasion of Iraq was only for the purpose of extending our international hegemony and stealing their oil, and that such an invasion would lead to a complete conflagration of the Middle East. None of that came true, as we see today. Twenty-five million people have been liberated, despite your best efforts to stop it."

Chomsky to me on December 14, 2003: "All of us who have opposed Saddam Hussein for 20 years, and the US policies that kept him in power, can certainly rejoice today, without hypocrisy. Others can rejoice too if they enjoy hypocrisy."

Me to Chomsky on February 9, 2004: "I'm dying to know what form this 'opposition' took, because it looked to me for all the world that you were the drum major leading the parade to stop the invasion; had you been successful, Saddam would still be in power and killing his own countrymen at the rate of several hundred per week. You say you were 'opposed to Saddam Hussein for 20 years'? How many hamlets did you liberate? How many prisoners did you and your brave fellow protestors rescue from the torture chambers? How many lives did your 'moral opposition' save? None, of course. But you know what? That's OK, because that's what we have Marine rifle companies for, and that's what we have armored cavalry brigades for, and that's what we have Navy SEAL detachments for, and fighter/attack aircraft, and Ranger battalions, and all the rest...."

Of course, I heard back from him right away, telling me how he was right and I was wrong, and all that jazz. I guess I'll write him back one day.

Then again, maybe not.

CONTRIBUTORS

Paul Bogdanor is a freelance writer living in London.

Werner Cohn is professor emeritus of sociology, University of British Columbia. His essay in this volume is adapted from a longer study, *Partners in Hate: Chomsky and the Holocaust Deniers*.

Peter Collier is the co-author, with David Horowitz, of *The Kennedys: An American Dream* and other dynastic biographies. His other books include *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty*.

David Horowitz is the co-author, with Peter Collier, of *Destructive Generation*. His other books include *Radical Son; The Politics of Bad Faith*; and *Uncivil Wars*. He is president of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture.

Eli Lehrer is a former editor of the *American Enterprise*. He is currently an analyst for UNISYS.

Robert D. Levine is associate professor of linguistics at Ohio State University and co-author, with Paul M. Postal, of a forthcoming book tentatively entitled *The Intellectually Corrupt Linguistics of Avram Noam Chomsky*.

Stephen J. Morris is a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia: Political Culture and the Causes of War*.

Thomas M. Nichols is chairman of the Department of Strategy and Policy, U.S. Naval War College, and the author of *Winning the World: Lessons for America's Future from the Cold War*.

Paul M. Postal is research professor of linguistics at New York University. He is the author of numerous works in linguistics, including *Skeptical Linguistic Essays*.

Ronald Radosh is the co-author, with Joyce Milton, of *The Rosenberg File*, the definitive work on the Rosenberg case, and of *Commies: A Journey Through the Old Left, the New Left and the Leftover Left*.

John Williamson studied modern languages at VMI and served in the U.S. Marine Corps. He is writing a book that deals with linguistics problems of the second order of difficulty and higher.

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