

INTRODUCTION

EXCAVATING THE TRUTH

Chomsky went to the dentist, who made his inspection and observed that the patient was grinding his teeth. Consultation with Mrs. Chomsky disclosed that teethgrinding was not taking place during the hours of sleep. When else? They narrowed it down quickly enough to the period each morning when Chomsky was reading the *New York Times*, unconsciously gnashing his molars at every page.

I asked Chomsky why, with the evidence and experience of a lifetime, he kept hoping against hope that the corporate press, particularly the *New York Times*, was going to get it right. Reality should long since have conditioned him to keep his jaw muscles relaxed. Chomsky sighed, as if in anticipation of all the stupid perversions of truth he was condemned to keep reading for the rest of his life, jolted each morning into furious bouts of bruxism.

Chomsky knows the score; he is not under the illusion that one day he will write a critique so compelling that the owner of the *New York Times* will suddenly perceive the error of his ways and order his minions to tilt toward truth. But he also believes in the power of reason, of compelling evidence carefully marshalled. Hence the grinding of the teeth. “I don’t know why they aren’t drowning in their own hypocrisy,” he remarked to me on the phone the other day, speaking with a kind of violent astonishment as we discussed the furor over “ethnic cleansing” in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which were raised voices of American Jews who had spent a lifetime keeping quiet about the ethnic cleansing that commenced in Israel in 1948.

Chomsky feels the abuses, cruelty, and hypocrisies of power more intensely than anyone I know. It’s a state of continual alertness. Often, after I’ve glanced at a story in the paper and skipped rapidly over the

familiar rubble of falsification, a week or two later will drop into my mailbox a photocopy of that same story marked up by Chomsky, with sentences underlined and a phrase or two in the margin etched deep into the paper by an angry pen.

People sometimes spot a reference in some column of mine to an offbeat paper or some foreign language publication and ask me how I manage to keep up with such a tide of newsprint. They imagine that I subscribe on a daily basis to *El Pais*, or the *Jerusalem Post*, or the *Anchorage Times* and hundreds more.

This apparent omnivorousness is mostly an illusion. Readers send things that have caught their eye. A fair-sized chunk of the weekly trawl is stuff sent on by Chomsky.

The times I've stayed the night at Noam and Carol Chomsky's house in Lexington I've watched him at eventide working his way through a capacious box of the day's intake of tripe—newspapers, weeklies, monthlies, learned journals, flimsy mimeo-ed mailers—while Carol Chomsky does the same thing on the other side of the room.

Add to this a voluminous correspondence—Chomsky once told me he spends twenty hours a week answering letters—plus telephone conversations, encounters with visitors to his office at MIT and we end up with a formidable intelligence system. The first duty of an intellectual is to know what's going on and it's very hard work.

Fred Gardner, writing a story for the *Anderson Valley Advertiser* about a visit by Chomsky to the Bay Area in the spring of 1991, remarked that

It's true that Chomsky has a fine understanding of history and contemporary politics; that he speaks to the point; that he has unrelenting courage . . . but he doesn't have any special inside sources; there's nothing in what he does or how he does it that's beyond the ability of any radical professor. There should be a Chomsky or two on every campus. The fact that it's a wasteland from Cambridge to Berkeley—that people have to wait for this linguist from MIT to come to town and critique US foreign policy—says a lot about our intellectually bankrupt academies.

This is true up to a point. Most of the time you don't need "special sources," merely the ability and stamina to read intelligently what material there is in the public domain. (One of the most successful efforts at information collection in the Second World War was run by a U.S. Army intelligence officer who simply had rooms full of people reading the Japanese and German press. At one point—the result of a

political row and consequent leak—the *Chicago Tribune* published the entire US Navy order of battle in the Pacific, a useful item apparently missed by the Japanese.)

There are in fact many campuses across America which have a radical faculty member or two doing their best to excavate the truth and bring it to light. Chomsky's most frequent observation about his innumerable speaking forays across the country concerns precisely the illusion that there is a wasteland between Cambridge and Berkeley, as against the reality—one that I've noted often enough myself—that the enquiring and even radical spirit flourishes widely, often in supposedly stony soil, such as at Texas A&M at College Station.

What Chomsky offers is a coherent "big picture," buttressed by the data of a thousand smaller pictures and discrete theaters of conflict, struggle, and oppression. People will go to a talk by Chomsky partly just to reassure themselves that they haven't gone mad; that they are right when they disbelieve what they read in the papers or watch on TV. For hundreds of thousands of people—over the years, he must have spoken to more American students than any other person alive—Chomsky has offered the assurance, the intellectual and moral authority, that there is another way of looking at things. In this vital function he stands in the same relationship to his audience as did a philosopher he admires greatly, Bertrand Russell.

There is the view, not unsympathetic to Chomsky, that he has been marginalised by the dominant culture. Until quite recently the man regarded internationally as among the US's most outstanding and influential intellectuals had never been interviewed on American network television, and was the subject of slander and abuse in the corporate press.

Such vilification is entirely predictable. Much of Chomsky's work involves memory, the memory of everything that vested power prefers to forget. Essays such as the one in honor of A. J. Muste where Chomsky evokes US policy toward Japan in the 1930s are, for the ruling elites, definitively out of bounds. To accept them is to acknowledge culpabilities of intolerable dimension.

One prominent member of the British intellectual elite, warning a colleague against getting into a dispute with Chomsky, described him as "a terrible and relentless opponent," by which he meant that Chomsky never surrenders ground, never cedes a position as part of some more elaborate maneuver. This is why, surely, abuse of the foulest and most childish kind descends upon him. His opponents shirk the real argument they fear they will lose, and substitute insult and distortion.

But beyond this, has Chomsky truly been marginalised? There have long been fierce attempts to exclude him from any orthodox venue of intellectual debate, most intense at moments when supposedly dissident intellectuals are beating a retreat toward the permitted terrain of official discussion—on Vietnam, the Middle East, Central America, and so forth. But to say that in consequence he is “marginalised” is absurd, given his actual weight in the culture at large.

“But it’s all so depressing,” cried JoAnn Wypijewski, managing editor of *The Nation*, when Chomsky had finished outlining to her his analysis of some supposed breakthrough in Palestinian-Israeli peace talks. “It’s not my job to cheer you up,” Chomsky replied.

I’ve heard people lament, after listening to a talk by Chomsky, that he doesn’t always offer, in the time allotted, the requisite dose of uplift and a simple route map to a benign future. One person I met, I think it was in Boulder, told me that he had written to the professor, reproaching him for just such omissions and had duly received a three-page, single-space letter setting forth the elements of a positive strategy and vision. Chomsky is a realist, not a pessimist, though the two, these days as almost always, tend to run in symbiotic harness. Chomsky believes deeply in the benign tendencies of human kind. He wouldn’t be an anarchist by political conviction if he did not.

(Chomsky does not, I have to admit, evince much interest in the tendencies and behavior of the natural kingdom, excluding humankind. I once chided him for describing Haitian refugees as having to guide their boats through “shark-infested waters.” On average, I reminded him, sharks kill about twenty-five humans around the world each year, in return for which humans kill, each year, about twenty-five million sharks. It was the sort of contrast between legend and reality Chomsky loves to expose on the human plane, but I could tell that the shark-icide had not really struck home. I mentioned to him not so long ago that I had some horses at my place in Humboldt County, northern California. He was incredulous. “Horses?” he snorted, asking sarcastically whether I played polo. It was the same when I mentioned I had cats.)

Chomsky’s greatest virtue is that his fundamental message is a simple one. Here’s how he put it in that interview in the *Anderson Valley Advertiser*:

Any form of authority requires justification; it’s not self justified. And the justification can rarely be given. Sometimes you can give it. I think

you can give an argument that you shouldn't let a three-year-old run across the street. That's a form of authority that's justifiable. But there aren't many of them, and usually the effort to give a justification fails. And when we try to face it, we find that the authority is illegitimate. And any time you find a form of authority illegitimate, you ought to challenge it. It's something that conflicts with human rights and liberties. And that goes on forever. You overcome one thing and discover the next.

In my view what a popular movement ought to be is just basically libertarian: concerned with forms of oppression, authority, and domination, challenging them. Sometimes they're justifiable under particular conditions, sometimes they're not. If they are not, try to overcome them.

—Alexander Cockburn
Petroliia, California
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LANGUAGE IN THE SERVICE OF PROPAGANDA

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David Barsamian: What is the relationship between politics and language?

There is a tenuous relationship, in fact several different kinds. I myself that they're exaggerated in importance. There is in the first place the question discussed, for example, by Orwell and by a number of others of how language is abused, tortured, distorted, in a way, to enforce ideological goals. A classic example would be the switch in the name of the Pentagon from the War Department to the Defense Department in 1947. As soon as that happened, any thoughtful person should have understood that the United States would no longer be engaged in defense. It would only be engaged in aggressive war. That was essentially the case, and it was part of the reason for the change in terminology, to disguise that fact. One can go on to give innumerable examples of that sort. Perhaps the classic discussion of it is Orwell's "Politics and the English Language."

There's also a more subtle and more interesting but even more tenuous connection: any stance that one takes with regard to social issues, for example, advocacy of some kind of reform or advocacy of a revolutionary change, an institutional change, or advocacy of stability and maintaining structures as they are—any such position, assuming that it has any moral basis at all and is not simply based on personal self-interest, is ultimately based on some conception of human nature. That is, if you suggest things should be reformed in this or that fashion and there's a moral basis for it, you are in effect saying, "Human beings are so constituted that this change is to their benefit. It somehow relates to their essential human

needs.” The underlying concept of human nature is rarely articulated. It’s more or less tacit and implicit and nobody thinks about it very much. But if we were ever to achieve the state—and we’re very far from this—if the study of humans were ever to reach the point of a discipline with significant intellectual content, this concept would have to be understood and articulated. If we search our souls we find that we do have a concept and it’s probably based on some ideas about the underlying and essential human need for freedom from external arbitrary constraints and controls, a concept of human dignity which would regard it as an infringement on fundamental human rights to be enslaved, owned by others, in my view even to be rented by others, as in capitalist societies, and so on. Those views are not established at the level of science. They’re just commitments. They could be issues of scientific investigation, that is, humans are what they are just as birds are what they are. The study of language may have some indirect relation, since it ultimately does investigate some fundamental components of human intelligence and their nature and is at least suggestive of what human cognitive faculties are ultimately like. One might draw some tenuous speculations about other aspects of human nature of a sort that I mentioned with regard to freedom from external constraints, to subordination to external power, etc. But that’s a real long distance, a hope for the future more than any present reality.

DB: Is freedom a linguistic imperative?

Just a superficial and obvious fact about human language is that it has an essentially creative aspect to it. Every normal human, independently of what we call “intelligence,” over a huge range, apart from really severe pathology, quickly and with amazing rapidity, acquires a linguistic system which enables them to express and create new thoughts and to interact with others who are also creating and expressing new thoughts and to do it without bounds, though in a highly constrained fashion in terms of a rule system that’s relatively fixed in its character as part of essential human nature, but that does permit and facilitate free creative expression. That’s a fundamental aspect about human intelligence. It apparently differentiates humans from any other organism that we know about. How much that extends to other domains is an area of speculation, but I think one can make some interesting guesses.

DB: Could you address the notion that words, language, have inherent power, concepts convey meaning beyond their words? What is happening mechanically

when certain phrases are used, such as “the free world” or “strategic interests” or “national interests”?

That’s the usual topic that’s discussed when people talk about politics and language, and I think it’s worth discussing, but I think it’s almost obvious to the point of banality. Terms like “the free world” and “the national interest” and so on are mere terms of propaganda. One shouldn’t take them seriously for a moment. They are designed, often very consciously, in order to try to block thought and understanding. For example, about the 1940s there was a decision, probably a conscious decision, made in public-relations circles to introduce terms like “free enterprise” and “free world” and so on instead of the conventional descriptive terms like “capitalism.” Part of the reason was to insinuate somehow that the systems of control and domination and aggression to which those with power were committed here were in fact a kind of freedom. That’s just vulgar propaganda exercises. We are inundated with this every moment of our lives. Many of us internalize it, one has to defend oneself against it. But once one realizes what’s going on it’s not very hard to defend against. These are ways in which our intellects are dulled and our capacity for thought is destroyed and our possibility for meaningful political action is undermined by very effective systems of indoctrination and thought control that involve, as all such systems do, abuse of language. One can see this everywhere.

DB: You have written, “Among the many symbols used to frighten and manipulate the populace of democratic states, few have been more important than terror and terrorism.” Could you talk about that?

For example, for the last several years, something called “international terrorism” has been right at the front of the agenda. There are conferences about it, books, articles, etc. We were told when the Reagan administration came in that the struggle against international terrorism was going to be the centerpiece of their foreign policy, and it’s continued that way. People debate as if they were in the real world. They’re not in the real world. There is such a thing as international terrorism, and the United States is one of the main sponsors of it. For example, according to the official doctrine, the one that we discuss and the one that [Secretary of State] George Shultz talks about, Cuba is one of the main centers of international terrorism.

The propaganda literature on this topic, meaning authors like Claire Sterling and Walter Laqueur and others—basically commissars—even

argues that the proof that the communists are behind it all is that terrorism is in the so-called “free world.” The fact of the matter is that Cuba has been subjected to more international terrorism than probably the rest of the world put together. This began in the early 1960s when the Kennedy administration launched a major terrorist war against Cuba. It went on for many years; for all we know it’s still going on. There’s very little reporting on it. You have to work hard to find out what’s going on from memoirs and participants’ reports and so on. What has happened is a level of international terrorism that as far as I know has no counterpart, apart from direct aggression. It’s included attacking civilian installations, bombing hotels, sinking fishing vessels, destroying petrochemical installations, poisoning crops and livestock, on quite a significant scale, assassination attempts, actual murders, bombing airplanes, bombing of Cuban missions abroad, etc. It’s a massive terrorist attack. But this never appears in the discussions of international terrorism. Or, for example, take the Middle East.

The very symbol of terrorism is the Palestine Liberation Organization. The PLO has certainly been involved in terrorist acts, but Israel, which is our client, has been involved in far greater—incomparably greater—terrorist acts. But we don’t call them terrorist acts. For example, in the spring of this year, four young Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, who live under conditions of extreme oppression, hijacked a bus and tried to drive it out of the Gaza Strip. They apparently didn’t have weapons; the bus was stopped by Israeli soldiers and in the fire they killed an Israeli woman on the bus. The soldiers knew that the bus was hijacked because these Palestinians had allowed a pregnant woman to leave the bus. It was a humanitarian act on their part. The people who hijacked the bus were captured. Two were killed at once and two were taken away and murdered, apparently after torture by Israeli soldiers. That’s all described as an act of Palestinian terrorism. There was an investigation of the murder of the two Palestinians by the Israeli army but nothing ever came of it; there’s been no prosecution. About the same time, Israel bombed an area in Baalbek in Lebanon. According to the press reports, including American press reports, there were about 400 casualties, including approximately 150 children who were killed or wounded in an attack which destroyed a schoolhouse. That wasn’t regarded as terrorism. Nobody ever referred to that as a terrorist act paid for by the United States, even though they used American jets. That’s just called an “unwise retaliatory strike” or something of that kind.

This goes all the way back to the early 1970s, which was the high point of Palestinian terror attacks, and they were terror attacks, as in Maalot, etc. At that point, Israel was carrying out extensive bombardment of civilian targets in southern Lebanon to the extent that they actually drove out several hundred thousand people. That was never called terrorism. To use the term “double standard” for our approach is to really abuse the term; it goes beyond anything that you could call a double standard. It’s almost a kind of fanaticism. It’s a reflection of the extreme success of indoctrination in American society. You don’t have any other society where the educated classes, at least, are so effectively indoctrinated and controlled by a propaganda system.

DB: Let’s talk about that propaganda system. You’ve referred many times to the “state propaganda apparatus.” What role do the media play in promoting and serving state interests?

One should be clear that in referring to the “state propaganda apparatus” here I do not mean that it comes from the state. Our system differs strikingly from, say, the Soviet Union, where the propaganda system literally is directed and controlled by the state. We’re not a society which has a Ministry of Truth which produces doctrine which everyone then must obey at a severe cost if you don’t. Our system works much differently and much more effectively. It’s a privatized system of propaganda, including the media, the journals of opinion and in general including the broad participation of the articulate intelligentsia, the educated part of the population. The more articulate elements of those groups, the ones who have access to the media, including intellectual journals, and who essentially control the educational apparatus, they should properly be referred to as a class of “commissars.” That’s their essential function: to design, propagate, and create a system of doctrines and beliefs which will undermine independent thought and prevent understanding and analysis of institutional structures and their functions. That’s their social role. I don’t mean to say they’re conscious of it. In fact, they’re not. In a really effective system of indoctrination the commissars are quite unaware of it and believe that they themselves are independent, critical minds. If you investigate the actual productions of the media, the journals of opinion, etc., you find exactly that. It’s a very narrow, very tightly constrained and grotesquely inaccurate account of the world in which we live.

The cases I mentioned in point are examples. There has never been more lively and extended debate in the United States, to my knowledge,

than occurred over the war in Vietnam. Nevertheless, except for the very margins at the outside, the debate was entirely between those who were called “doves” and “hawks.” Both the doves and the hawks began by accepting a lie so astonishing that Orwell couldn’t have imagined it. Namely the lie that we were defending South Vietnam when we were in fact attacking South Vietnam. Once you begin with that premise, everything else follows.

Pretty much the same is true right now. Let’s take the recent flap about the MIG’s in Nicaragua. What was happening? The United States is sending advanced aircraft to El Salvador so that we are able to step up our attack on the population of El Salvador. The army that’s carrying out this attack is really an occupying army, just like the Polish army is an occupying army of Poland, supported by a foreign power, except that the one in El Salvador is far more brutal and carrying out vastly more atrocities. We are trying to step up this attack by sending advanced aircraft and American pilots are now directly participating in controlling air strikes, etc. It’s perfectly natural, and any student of Orwell would expect that we would accuse the other side of bringing in advanced aircraft. We’re also conducting a real war against Nicaragua through a mercenary army. They’re called “guerrillas” in the press, but they’re nothing like any guerrilla army that’s ever existed. They’re armed at the level of a Central American army. They often outgun the Nicaraguan army. They’re completely supplied and controlled by a foreign power. They have very limited indigenous support, as far as anybody knows. It’s a foreign mercenary army attacking Nicaragua, using Nicaraguan soldiers, as is often the case in imperial wars.

In this context, the big discussion is whether the Nicaraguans did or did not bring in aircraft which they could use to defend themselves. The doves say they probably didn’t bring them in and therefore it was exaggerated. The doves also say, and here you can quote them—Paul Tsongas, for example, or Christopher Dodd, the most dovish senators in Congress—that if indeed the Nicaraguans did bring in jets, then we should bomb them, because they would be a threat to us.

When one looks at this, one sees something almost indescribable. Fifty years ago we heard Hitler talking about Czechoslovakia as a dagger pointed at the heart of Germany and people were appalled. But Czechoslovakia was a real threat to Germany as compared with the threat that Nicaragua poses to the United States. If we heard a discussion like this in the Soviet Union, where people were asking whether, let’s

say, Denmark should be bombed because it has jets which could reach the Soviet Union, we would be appalled. In fact, that's an analogy that's unfair to the Russians. They're not attacking Denmark as we're attacking Nicaragua and El Salvador. But here we accept it all. We accept it because the educated classes, the ones who are in a position, through prestige, privilege, education, etc., to present an intelligible understanding of the world, are so subordinated to the doctrinal system that they can't even see that two plus two equals four. They cannot see what's right in front of their eyes: that we are attacking Nicaragua and El Salvador and that of course the Nicaraguans have every right to defend themselves against our attack. If the Soviet Union had a mercenary army attacking Denmark, carrying out terrorist acts and trying to destroy the country, Denmark would have a right to defend itself. We would agree with that. When a comparable thing happens in our domains, the only thing we ask is, are they or are they not bringing in planes to defend themselves? If they are then we have a right to attack them even more.

That assumption is essentially across the board. There's virtually no voice in the press which questions our right to take even more violent action against Nicaragua if they're doing something serious to defend themselves. That's an indication of a highly brainwashed society. By our standards Hitler looked rather sane in the 1930s.

DB: Let's talk a bit further about language and politics, specifically in the case of Nicaragua. The US ambassador to Costa Rica was quoted in the New York Times as saying that "The Nicaraguan government has an extreme left network working for them in Washington. This is the same network that worked against American interests in Vietnam. It's sad to say that many congressmen are prisoners of their own staffs, who rely on a preponderance of information from the left." The ambassador then likens Nicaragua to Nazi Germany, and he makes this final statement that I'd particularly like you to address: "Nicaragua has become just like an infected piece of meat attracting these insects from all over," the insects being Libyans, Basque separatists, Cubans, the PLO, etc.

All of this is very reminiscent of Nazi Germany. The ambassador's remarks are very typical of those produced by the Nazi diplomats at the same point, even in their style, the talk about "insects" and so on. Of course, what he describes is so remote from reality that it's superfluous even to discuss it. The idea of a leftist network in Washington is hilarious. What he would call "leftists" are people like Tsongas and Dodd. Those are precisely the kind of people he's referring to. The people who say that

we should bomb Nicaragua if they do something to defend themselves. That's what to the ambassador is a leftist attempting to undermine our policy. This is like a discussion of true Nazi propaganda, which doesn't even make a pretense of being related to reality and regards any deviation as unacceptable. We have to have total conformity, from his view, to the position that we are permitted and justified in carrying out any act of subversion, aggression, torture, murder, etc. Any deviation from that position is, from his point of view, a leftist conspiracy directed from Moscow. This is the extreme end of the propaganda system, but it's not the important part, in my view. It's so crazy that anybody can see through it.

The important part is the kind that doesn't seem so crazy, the kind that's presented by the doves, who ultimately accept not dissimilar positions. They accept the principle that we do have the right to use force and violence to undermine other societies that threaten our interests, which are the interests of the privileged, not the interests of the population. They accept that position and they discuss everything in those terms. Hence our attack against another country becomes "defense" of that country. Hence an effort by Nicaragua to acquire jets to defend itself becomes an unacceptable act that should evoke further violence on our part. It's that apparently critical position that plays the most significant role in our propaganda system. That's a point that's often not recognized.

The point is clearer if it's something that's a little more remote, so that we're not directly engaged in it now. Let's take the Vietnam War. The major contribution to the doctrinal system during the Vietnam War period, in my view, is certainly the position of the doves. The doves were saying that we were defending South Vietnam, that's just a given, but that it was unwise, that it was costing too much, that it was beyond our capacity and beyond our power. If we're capable of thinking, we'll see that their position is very much like that of Nazi generals after Stalingrad, who said it was a mistake to get into a two-front war, and we probably won't carry it off, and this is probably an effort that should be modified and changed, though it is of course just and right. We don't consider the Nazi generals doves. We recognize what they are. But in a society in which that position is considered to be the dissenting, critical position, the capacity for thought has been destroyed. It means the entire spectrum of thinkable thoughts is now caught within the propaganda system.

It's the critics who make the fundamental contribution to this. They are the ones who foreclose elementary truth, elementary analysis, independent thought by pretending and being regarded as adopting a critical position, whereas in fact they are subordinated to the fundamental principles of the propaganda system. In my view that's a lot more important than the really lunatic comments that you just quoted.

DB: What can people do to cut through this elaborate and ornamented framework of propaganda and get at what is real, get at the truth?

I frankly don't think that anything more is required than ordinary common sense. What one has to do is adopt toward one's own institutions, including the media and the journals and the schools and colleges, the same rational, critical stance that we take toward the institutions of any other power.

For example, when we read the productions of the propaganda system in the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany, we have no problem at all in dissociating lies from truth and recognizing the distortions and perversions that are used to protect the institutions from the truth. There's no reason why we shouldn't be able to take the same stance toward ourselves, despite the fact that we have to recognize that we're inundated with this constantly, day after day. A willingness to use one's own native intelligence and common sense to analyze and dissect and compare the facts with the way in which they're presented is really sufficient.

If the schools were doing their job, which of course they aren't, but they could be, they would be providing people with means of intellectual self-defense. They would be devoting themselves with great energy and application to precisely the kinds of things we're talking about so that people growing up in a democratic society would have the means of intellectual self-defense against the system. Today, individuals have to somehow undertake this task themselves. I don't think it's really very hard. Once one perceives what is happening, they have to take the first step of adopting a stance that is simply one of critical intelligence toward everything you read, in this morning's newspaper or tomorrow's newspaper or whatever and discover the assumptions that underlie it. Then analyze those assumptions and restate the account of the facts in terms that really are true to the facts, not simply reflections of the distorting prism of the propaganda system. Once one does that I think the world becomes rather clear. Then one can become a free individual, not merely a slave of some system of indoctrination and control.

DB: Could you talk about the twentieth century nation-state? You've written extensively about it. What is it in its makeup that permits first genocide, and now what Edward Said called in an article in Harper's the "phenomenon of refugees." Are these phenomena of the twentieth century nation-state? Would you accept those assumptions?

I don't entirely. I think there's some truth to it, simply because the modern nation-state and the European model, that is, including the United States, happened to be by historical standards enormously powerful. The degree of power in the hands of a modern nation-state is something with no historical parallel. This power is centrally controlled to a very high extent with a very limited degree of popular participation in how that power is exercised. Also, we have an awesome increase in the level of power in the hands of the state, and as a result an enormous amount of violence.

However, it's very misleading to think of, say, genocide as being a twentieth century phenomenon. Let's just take our own history, the history of the conquest of the Western Hemisphere. We celebrate every year, at least in Massachusetts, we have a holiday called "Columbus Day," and very few people are aware that they're celebrating one of the first genocidal monsters of the modern era. That's exactly what Columbus was. It's as if they celebrated "Hitler Day" in Germany. When the colonists from Spain and England and Holland and so on came to the Western Hemisphere, they found flourishing societies. Current anthropological work indicates that the number of native people in the Western Hemisphere may have approached something like 100 million, maybe about 80 million south of the Rio Grande and 12 million or so north of the river. Within about a century, that population had been destroyed. Take just north of the Rio Grande, where once there were maybe 10 or 12 million Native Americans. By 1900 there were about 200,000. In the Andean region and Mexico there were very extensive Indian societies, and they're mostly gone. Many of them were just totally murdered or wiped out, others succumbed to European-brought diseases. This is massive genocide, long before the emergence of the twentieth century nation-state. It may be one of the most, if not *the* most, extreme examples from history, but far from the only one. These are facts that we don't recognize.

The ways in which we protect ourselves from these facts are often quite astonishing. Let me give you a personal example. This past Thanksgiving, last week, my family visited. We went for a walk in a

nearby national park. We came across a gravestone which had on it an inscription, placed by the National Parks as a testimonial, in fact as a gesture, no doubt conceived as a liberal gesture toward the Indians in the past: "Here lies an Indian woman, a Wampanoag, whose family and tribe gave of themselves and their land that this great nation might be born and grow." That is so appalling that one doesn't even know how to discuss it. She and her family didn't "give of themselves and their land." Rather they were murdered by our forefathers and driven out of their land. It's as if two hundred years from now you came to Auschwitz and found a gravestone saying, "Here lies a Jewish woman. She and her family gave of themselves and their possessions so that this great nation might grow and prosper." These are reflections of what is regarded here as a liberal, accommodating, forthcoming attitude. All of these aspects of our historical experience, of the foundations of our own society, we are protected from seeing. Looking at that gravestone, any person of even minimal common sense and just the most elementary knowledge of history should be able to see the propaganda. But person after person passes it by and thinks it's fine, an indication of a frightening level of indoctrination.

DB: This raises the question of who controls history in our society.

History is owned by the educated classes. These are the people who are the custodians of history. They are the ones who are in universities and throughout the whole system of constructing, shaping, and presenting to us the past as they want it to be seen. These are groups that are closely associated with power. They themselves have a high degree of privilege and access to power. They share class interests with those who control and in fact own the economic system. They are the cultural commissars of the system of domination and control that's very pervasive. I'm avoiding nuances. There are important exceptions. There are people who write honest history. But the point I'm describing is something that is overwhelmingly dominant, to the extent that only specialists would be likely to know things that fall outside it. For the ordinary citizen, one that doesn't have the resources or the time or the training or the education to really dig into things deeply on their own. The position they're presented with is the one I've described. For example, the gravestone implicitly supports the idea that genocide is a twentieth-century phenomenon, failing to recognize what happened not too far back in our own past.

DB: Could you talk about what is called “the first genocide of the twentieth century,” which occurred in 1915 in Ottoman Turkey to the Armenians. Why is that a virtually unknown event? Why is that relegated to the periphery of our awareness?

Essentially because people had very little interest in it at the time. What happened is that something between several hundred thousand, maybe over a million people, were massacred in a quite short period. It was in Turkey, remote, no direct interest to Westerners. I think much more dramatic and striking is the suppression of comparable genocidal acts which are much closer to us, and in fact in which we have been directly involved. For example, I would wager that more people are aware of the Armenian genocide during the First World War than are aware of the Indonesian genocide in 1965 when seven hundred thousand people were massacred within a couple of months, with the support of the United States. It was greeted with polite applause in the United States because it “returned Indonesia to the free world,” as we described it at the time. Genocide was used, including by American liberals, I should say, as justification for our war in Indochina. It was described as having provided a “shield” behind which these delightful events could take place. That’s a much more striking fact than our casual attitude toward a genocidal attack on the Armenians seventy years ago.

DB: That connects directly with a two-volume set that you coauthored with Edward Herman, The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism and After the Cataclysm. You talk extensively about the 1965 coup in Indonesia and then the events in 1975, in East Timor . . .

Which are still going on, incidentally. There’s a case of genocide that’s going on right today and is continuing precisely because the United States supports it. That’s what blocks any possible termination of that genocidal attack. There’s one right in front of our eyes for which we’re directly responsible and there’s virtually no awareness of it. I doubt if one person in one hundred in the United States ever even heard of Timor [East Timor was a former Portuguese colony].

DB: Why is that? Does it serve some ideological interest that there’s no information?

Sure. It’s improper for people in the United States to know that their own government is involved in a genocidal massacre which is quite comparable to Pol Pot. Therefore they better not know about it, and they don’t. This is particularly striking because it began, as you

say, in 1975, just at the time that the Pol Pot massacres began. They're rather comparable in many ways, except that the Timorese massacre was carried out by an invading army rather than being a peasant revolution taking revenge and controlled by a gang of fanatics who were carrying out huge massacres in their own society. These two are rather comparable in scale. Relative to the population, in fact, the Timorese massacre is maybe two or three times as great, once all the propaganda is filtered away and we look at the actual facts. The treatment of them was quite different. The Pol Pot massacres received enormous attention, tremendous protest, and was compared to the Nazis. The Timorese massacre, that we were responsible for, was suppressed. People went way out of their way to try to find Cambodian refugees on the Thai-Cambodian border so that they could tell horror stories. They didn't go to Lisbon, which is much easier to reach than the Thai-Cambodian border, to talk to Timorese refugees who would tell them what the United States was backing in Timor.

That whole near-genocidal attack, the term is not exaggerated in this case, was almost entirely suppressed for over four years. Even today it's barely discussed, and when it is discussed, the American role is suppressed. For example, the *New York Times* finally began to talk about it and ran editorials. One was called "The Shaming of Indonesia." Sure, it's the shaming of Indonesia, but it's also the shaming of the United States. We're the ones who blocked every diplomatic effort to stop it. The Carter administration, which was supposedly committed to human rights, vastly increased the flow of arms to Indonesia with the certain knowledge that they were going to be used to extend the massacre in East Timor. There was nothing else that they could be used for. None of this is the shaming of the United States, nor is it the shaming of the *New York Times* that they didn't report it for four years, and even today aren't reporting what's going on.

These are again ways of protecting ourselves from understanding the world. The population has to be protected from any understanding of that. That's one of the main purposes of the indoctrination system, to prevent the population from understanding what they are participating in indirectly through the institutions that they support.

DB: And one sees, for example, in the case of the massacre and ongoing killings in East Timor, a certain sense of bipartisanship. It started under the Ford administration in 1975, it continued during the Carter years . . .

It escalated during the Carter years, the worst period was Carter, and it's still continuing now. Last year there was another major Indonesian offensive. Once again the Red Cross has been withdrawn, so there's virtually no international observation. About the only information we're getting is from refugees and the Catholic Church. The church has been reporting these atrocities, but that virtually never reaches an American audience. We should ask ourselves, why are our institutions so concerned to prevent us from knowing what we're doing? I think the people in power are simply afraid of the population. If the general population has any awareness and understanding of what the state is up to, they'll protest and they'll stop it. That's why we have these extremely elaborate and very effective systems of thought control. Why don't they just tell us the truth? They don't tell us the truth because they're afraid of us. They're afraid that if we know we're going to stop them. Hence the lies. Hence the educational system. Hence the media. And so on.

DB: Let's talk about what I reluctantly call "censorship." Perhaps you can find a better word for it here in the United States. Earlier I mentioned the two-volume set that you have coauthored with Edward Herman, The Washington Connection and After the Cataclysm. Correct me if I'm mistaken, but I believe that neither of those books received any prominent media coverage or book reviews, and now you have a new book with the title The Fateful Triangle which has only received two reviews. One can draw two conclusions: Either the books are indeed terrible and not worth writing about, or perhaps a more cynical point of view would be that there's some kind of censorship being exercised here.

As to whether they're worth writing about, obviously I think so or I wouldn't have written them. We can make a kind of objective test of that. For example, we can ask how the same books are received in other societies similar to ours. Take, say, Canada. Canada is a country very similar to the United States and has essentially the same values, institutions, social organizations, etc. Kind of like an adjunct to the United States. But as soon as we cross the border, we find that the treatment of these books and their authors is radically different than it is here.

For example, *The Fateful Triangle*, which came out about a year ago, is primarily concerned with American policy. It's peripheral to the interests of Canadians, but central to the interests of Americans. It was barely mentioned in the press here, and is very hard to find. You have to really work to dig it out somewhere. It's probably not in the libraries. But in Canada it was reviewed in major journals and most

minor journals; even in the *Financial Post*, which is sort of like the *Wall Street Journal*. It was reviewed in the news weeklies, the equivalent of *Time* and *Newsweek*. Every time I go to Canada I'm immediately on radio and television. I was there last week for a day, and I had three interviews on national CBC. In the United States, people with similar views, not just me, are marginalized, excluded, no reviews. You rarely find such books in the libraries; the media are almost totally closed off.

If we look at other countries similar to the United States, the same is true. In England and Australia, again countries very much like us, these books are reviewed, discussed, etc. Not in the United States, however. If the judgment is one of quality, then it's striking that the judgment is so different across the border. Incidentally, many of the reviews are quite critical, but that's fair enough. People say what they think.

DB: Could you speculate why, for example, you're not on occasionally Dan Rather's CBS Evening News or National Public Radio's All Things Considered? Has Noam Chomsky been marginalized, to use the very term that you've coined?

That's always been the case. For example, during the Vietnam War, when I was very visible in opposition to the war on the international scene and here too, I live in Boston and I was constantly in the radio and television studios here. But for foreign interviews. I think I was once on public radio in the Boston area during the Vietnam War. I had just returned from a trip to Indochina and I was on for about five minutes.

But I was constantly on Australian, Canadian, British, continental European radio and television. That's consistently the case. Just in the last few weeks I've been on national Italian television, on Canadian television, on Irish radio, all over the place. In another couple of weeks I'm going to England for a day for a big television program discussing politics. In the United States it's virtually unknown.

In fact it's very striking that I'm now talking over a Colorado radio station. When you get out of the main centers in the United States, out of New York, Boston, and Washington, then the controls ease. If I go to Denver or Boulder or Des Moines or Minneapolis or San Diego, then it's not at all unlikely that I'll be asked to talk on political topics on radio and sometimes television. But in the main ideological centers it's unimaginable. Again, that's not just me, but also other people who are essentially dissenting critics. This reflects the sophistication of our ideological system.

What happens in areas that are marginal with respect to the exercise of power doesn't matter so much. What happens in the centers of power matters a great deal. Therefore the controls are tighter as you get closer to the center. As soon as you cross the border to Canada nobody really cares much what happens, so therefore it's much freer.

DB: So essentially if, as you did last year, you come to Boulder and give many public lectures and appear on KGNU and now doing a phone interview on KGNU, that's OK since we're out here in the boondocks, as it were.

It's not totally OK, but it's better. It could never happen on National Public Radio. [On March 30, 1988, Noam Chomsky was interviewed for the first time on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*.]

DB: One final question, about George Orwell. I sense from your writing and from some of the comments you've made in this interview that you feel a certain kinship with Orwell. Have you been influenced by him at all?

It's a little complicated. I think Orwell wrote one really great book which did influence me a lot. That was *Homage to Catalonia*, the book that he wrote about his experiences during the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s. The history of that book is itself interesting and revealing. It appeared in 1937 but was not published in the United States. It was published in England, and it sold a couple hundred copies. The reason that the book was suppressed was because it was critical of communists. That was a period when pro-communist intellectuals had a great deal of power in the intellectual establishment. It's similar to the kind of control that many people called "pro-Israel," although I think it's a bad term, but people who are called "pro-Israel" have over media and expression today. They're similar in many respects. They succeeded in preventing Orwell's book from appearing.

It did appear about ten years later, and it appeared as a Cold War tract because it was anti-Russian and fashions had changed. That was a really important book. I think there were things wrong with it, but it was a book of real great significance and importance. It's probably the least known of Orwell's major political books.

His better-known books in my view are not very significant. For example, *1984*, which is very popular here, in fact it's a major bestseller, because it can be easily construed as anti-Russian propaganda. But it's a very shallow book, basically. Orwell was giving a satirical analysis based upon existing Soviet society. Existing Soviet society and its terror have been very well described by factual analyses not very well known

here, but they existed. People like Maximov, for example, the anarchist historian, had given excellent detailed analyses of Leninist and Stalinist institutionalized terror going back to the Revolution. You didn't have to go to Orwell and fantasy to find this out. Orwell's fictionalized account was in my view no major contribution and also not very well done. We also tend to suppress some of the aspects of it. He was also talking about England, not just Russia. He was talking about what he expected to happen in the industrial democracies, and as a prediction that was very bad, that hasn't happened.

I also think he missed the main techniques of thought control and indoctrination in the democracies. For example, in England and the United States we do not use the devices for control he described: crude vicious use of highly visible power. That's not the way thought control works here. It works by more subtle and much more effective devices, the kinds we've been talking about. Orwell completely missed this.

On the other hand, he was an honest man. He did try to, and often succeeded, in extricating himself from the systems of thought control, and in that respect he was very unusual and very praiseworthy.

DB: Bernard Crick, a British biographer of Orwell, seems to corroborate what you say. He suggests that it is in the essays where "the dirty work of imperialism is illuminated," such as "A Hanging" and "Shooting an Elephant," that Orwell would be best remembered and the earlier mentioned "Politics and the English Language."

I agree with that. The famous works are the least significant.

2

ISRAEL: THE STRATEGIC ASSET

March 23, 1985

DB: One of the most interesting aspects of the relationship between the United States and Israel is that in this country there is virtually unanimous agreement on US support for Israeli policies. To cite one example, in the March 4, 1985 New York Times, Senator Daniel Inouye said he: “doesn’t understand why administration after administration, Republican and Democrat, puts the squeeze on Israel. I am convinced that it is in our best national interest to make sure a strong, viable Israel continues to exert its influence in that part of the world.” He continues, in asking for more aid for Israel, that “we have received more than our money’s worth.” I’d like you to discuss some of the factual and moral premises inherent in Inouye’s comments about Israel and that it is in our “best national interest.”

I’d also like to comment about how we “put the squeeze on Israel.” Since 1978 they’ve gotten something ranging between a third to a half of the total American military and economic aid in the world. That’s a country of four million people, so the concept of the “squeeze” is interesting.

I think it’s clear what Inouye means, and there’s some logic to it. Israel has served certain kinds of American interests, and the aid to Israel is closely correlated to the American conception of how they can serve American interests. What the United States wants from Israel is that it become a technologically advanced, highly militarized society without any independent or viable economy of its own so that it’s totally dependent on the United States and therefore dependable. We maintain it in a position, our policy is designed to create a system of dependence with a capacity for organized violence so that we can use it as what we

call a “strategic asset,” which means a kind of an attack dog. It’s what was called under the Nixon doctrine a “guardian of the Gulf.” Namely, a force which can be used either as a base for projection of American military force or its own military force in the case of any conceived threat to quite narrowly perceived American interests in the region. The main interest is to ensure that there’s no development of what we call “radical nationalism.” Radical nationalism is a technical term meaning nationalist forces that don’t obey American orders.

It’s counterposed to “moderate nationalism,” which means nationalism that does follow American orders. The major American interest in the region is of course not Israel but the energy resources which, it’s been known for forty or fifty years, are the largest and cheapest in the world. We want to make sure that there’s no indigenous threat to our domination of that system.

In the early years we assumed that our own power could achieve that result. But increasingly over the years, as the world has become more complex and the American capacity to intervene directly has reduced, the United States has turned to surrogates. This became more or less formalized in the Nixon-Kissinger doctrine, which quite explicitly explained that while the United States would be committed to maintaining what Kissinger called the “overall framework of order,” regional powers would pursue particular goals within this system. That meant it was a matter of designating the “local cop on the beat” to control the neighborhood, while police headquarters remains in Washington. That’s in effect the Nixon-Kissinger doctrine.

With regard to the extremely crucial Middle East region, primarily the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, where most of the oil is, the conception was that Israel and Iran under the Shah would be what was then called “guardians of the Gulf.” That’s the primary basis for this enormous military support, which has the predictable consequence of turning Israel into a kind of Sparta, essentially eliminating its status as a viable society other than as a military force designed to serve American interests in the region. Correspondingly, Israel is also expected to provide subsidiary services. That’s part of the quid pro quo.

This began in the 1960s as Israel began to be framed in the American geopolitical conception as a strategic asset. In the 1960s, under a large CIA subsidy, Israel penetrated Black Africa, in the interests of American power. They were, for example, the main force that succeeded in establishing the Mobutu dictatorship in Zaire. They supported Idi Amin

in Uganda in the early days, Haile Selasse in Ethiopia, Emperor Bokassa in the Central African Republic, and various others who the United States was trying to cultivate and use for its Latin Americanization of Africa. The establishment of dependable client regimes, generally military-based, would be assured to control the local societies.

Increasingly, these secondary services have moved elsewhere, however, primarily Latin America. During the 1970s, under popular pressure, Congress legislated human rights constraints which restricted the American executive in its attempts to support the worst murderers and monsters in Latin America. Therefore they had to move, under the Carter administration, and since under the Reagan administration, to do it indirectly using surrogates. Israel was able to establish close relations with the neo-Nazi regimes in the southern cone, Argentina and Chile. That's in the American interest, since the United States had to sidestep direct support for them. In Central America the United States relied primarily on Argentine Nazis, but increasingly, and by now primarily, on Israeli forces to support genocidal attacks on the Indian population in Guatemala or to send arms to El Salvador and Honduras to support the contras are two examples.

This is a long and very ugly story, and that's a secondary aspect to the services that Israel is expected to provide for us. All of this is in the public record. If we speculate about what's in the secret record, the United States has major conventional military forces aimed at the Persian Gulf. It's called the Central Command. It used to be called the Rapid Deployment Force. If any unwanted nationalist developments take place in that region, we'll invade. But we need a basing system for that, and we have by now a very elaborate basing system stretching from Turkey all the way around the region to the Indian Ocean. Though there is no public document on this, it's a fair guess, a near certainty, that Israel is regarded as a central part of that basing system.

Much of what I have just said is not only obvious from the way history has evolved but it's expressed in the declassified record. For example, you can see how the American relationship to Israel has changed over the years. In the early 1950s it was rather cool and conflicted. In 1956, we ordered Israel out of the Sinai after it had attacked Egypt, the reason being that it had attacked Egypt jointly with France and England. We were then referring to France and England as essentially our enemies. They were attempting to reassert a position from which we had expelled them because we wanted to control that region ourselves. Israel, in its

attack on Egypt jointly with them, was essentially conspiring with the enemy, so we threw them out. In the early 1950s at least it wasn't clear who the United States was going to use as the basis for its regional power.

There was some support for using Nasser's Egypt for this purpose. Nasser had some CIA backing at the time and other support. By the mid-1950s it became pretty clear that Nasser was going to be a radical nationalist. That is, he wasn't going to follow American orders, and Nasserite influence began to spread throughout the region. By 1958, a National Security Council memorandum on the Middle East concluded that "a logical corollary" to our opposition to radical Arab nationalism would be support for Israel as the only reliable pro-Western force in the region.

Through the 1960s this increased. American intelligence regarded Israel as a barrier to "nationalist pressure"—Nasserite pressure—in the Arabian Peninsula, and there was a kind of proxy war going on in the southern part of the peninsula between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Israel was regarded as a shield protecting the monarchies which controlled the oil and very much subordinated to the United States. Israel's 1967 victory, which really showed that it was the overwhelmingly dominant military force in the region, confirmed its value as a strategic asset. The United States certainly supported Israel in that attack and may actually have participated in it. There's evidence to that effect. It certainly supported it.

At that point American aid to Israel increased enormously and it seemed like Senator Inouye and others recognized that this could be a valuable military force.

In 1970, American aid to Israel quadrupled after Israel had succeeded in doing something that we desperately needed at that time. There was concern that Syria might intervene in Jordan to protect Palestinians who were being massacred by the Jordanian army. The United States was very much concerned about that and regarded it as a potential threat to the oil-producing region. Israel was able to use its overwhelming military force to block any possible Syrian support for the Palestinians and American aid shot up. It was at that point that the Nixon doctrine was explicitly formulated and Israel's role was more or less formalized regarding the Gulf. When the Shah fell in 1979, Iran lost that role, plainly, and Israel was left the sole reliable militarized base for the United States. Aid to Israel again shot up enormously.

At that time we also carried through what is called here the “peace process,” which is kind of an Orwellian term, referring to the fact that we instituted a system whereby Egypt was totally excluded from the conflict through the Camp David agreements. The intent and consequences of that policy were to leave Israel free to extend and intensify its occupation of the occupied territories and also to attack its northern neighbor without any concern for a deterrent force. That’s exactly what happened from 1978. The first invasion of Lebanon was in 1978. The repression and expansion of settlements in the occupied territories increased rapidly. Israel continued to attack Lebanon, and in 1982 it invaded directly, and we know the consequences since. All of this flowed quite predictably and directly from the Camp David “peace process.” That again is part of the whole system of turning Israel into a militarized state.

By now it’s probably the most militarized society in the world. It has probably the highest per capita debt in the world. Its status as an economic entity, for example, is reflected in its credit ratings with international banks, which are below that of Mozambique or Bangladesh, and that’s even with the huge American subsidies. Increasingly it’s undergoing the kind of internal changes, cultural changes and others, which follow from this debt. This is related to the reason why the United States has consistently blocked any possibility of a diplomatic settlement. There have been many possibilities, at least since 1971, for a peaceful political settlement. The United States has consistently blocked all of them because they would require that Israel be a peaceful member of a region in which relations are conducted by diplomacy rather than violence, and we won’t accept that. That won’t be the role that we want Israel to play.

Virtually all of this has been very easily documented. I’ve written about it; there’s plenty of material, but it’s almost totally suppressed and distorted in the official versions. We talk about the “peace process” and “Israel’s search for peace,” etc. That’s the real story. How much Senator Inouye actually understands of what he’s saying, I don’t know. But the people who do the actual planning surely understand this, and it’s this evolving conception of Israel’s strategic role in the region which accounts for its enormous and rather special kind of subsidy that we provide, one that’s guaranteed to maintain it as a military force and to maintain a situation of military confrontation in the region, which is part of this whole thing.

DB: Indeed, the Camp David process has kind of entered the popular mythology. It has a Nobel Peace Prize mystique about it and we celebrate it as a model, as the proper vehicle for settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Senator John Kerry, in Denver on March 16, 1985, said that he favored "a return to the Camp David process." Why is Camp David so firmly established as the model?

That's an indication of the marvelous effectiveness of the American indoctrination system. Let's recall that Camp David was an agreement whereby Israel left the Sinai and foreign forces, including American, were placed in the Sinai to ensure that that's not an area of military confrontation. That, in effect, excluded Egypt from the conflict. That's the only thing that was done in Camp David, to exclude the major Arab military force from the conflict. Its exclusion, which they themselves wanted, means that there is no deterrent to Israel's doing whatever it wants. What it felt like doing was obvious: moving toward taking over and integrating the occupied territories and harassing the northern border, expanding toward the north. It has continued to do that until it suffered its first military defeat in the last couple of months at the hands of the Lebanese resistance. Up until that point it was just regular expansion toward the north. In order to ensure that they would do this effectively, we massively increased military aid to Israel at the same time, 1978–79. As already mentioned, the fall of the Shah was a side element in this, that left Israel the sole reliable guardian of the Gulf.

The peace process entailed American aid reaching enormous proportions. In 1979, it was something like 50 percent of total American aid overseas. What was in Jimmy Carter's mind I have no idea, but it was obvious to any rational person that if you free Israel from any deterrent force by eliminating the only substantial Arab military force in the region, and if you then provide it with enormous subsidies, then it will attack as it has done.

The subsidies, incidentally, are unspecified. In the case of every other aid program in the world it's project oriented; we require specific indications of what the aid is going to be used for. Usually it has to be used for purchase of American exports or something like that. In any case, it's closely supervised. For example, in Egypt, which is the next largest aid recipient, we have something like 125 technicians supervising the aid down to the last detail and making sure it's used for exactly the project we want it used for. Israel is unique: the aid, which is unbelievably high on a per capita basis—off the chart—also happens to be unsupervised. It's just a cash grant. We're telling them, Do whatever you like with it.

That's a not too subtle way of telling them, Use it for settlement of the occupied territories, use it for military attacks against Lebanon, etc. That was perfectly predictable, and furthermore it's exactly what happened. Even people who couldn't see it at the time can look back now and see that that's what happened. The expansion into the occupied territories, which had been going on for ten years at that point, then increased very rapidly. Also, the repression in the occupied territories increased. The military occupation, which had always been harsh, became much more brutal especially in 1981 and 1982. And Israel attacked Lebanon. It invaded Lebanon in 1978. Through 1979, there was heavy bombardment against Lebanon with hundreds, maybe thousands, of people killed.

Israel repeatedly broke ceasefires to initiate attacks against Lebanon. In July 1981, in one important case, Israeli planes broke a ceasefire, attacked Lebanon. There was at that point a light rocket response, at which time Israel stepped up the attack and bombed Beirut, killing several hundred people. After that there was a heavier rocket response against the northern Galilee, and even heavier Israeli bombings. These were finally stopped by an American-imposed ceasefire in late July. At the time it was stopped, about 450 Arabs and 6 Israelis had been killed, which are normal proportions reflecting the power balance.

The only thing that's remembered from all that today is that rockets were fired at northern Galilee. That's in the news reports, that's always cited now as a justification for Israel's attack on Lebanon. Yes, rockets were fired on northern Galilee in response to heavy Israeli bombing which killed hundreds of civilians. After this point, the PLO did adhere to the ceasefire scrupulously; there were no attacks across the Lebanese border for eleven months or so. Israel, on the other hand, attempted throughout that period, 1981–82, to elicit some kind of PLO action which could be used as an alleged provocation, a pretext for the further attack on Lebanon, which they began planning in July 1981.

Again, this was completely predictable. The American press either couldn't or pretended not to be able to see it, but it was obvious at the time. Throughout 1981 and 1982 there were repeated Israeli provocations, including bombing of Lebanese towns, to elicit some kind of action, maybe shelling of the north or something, which could then be used as a pretext for the invasion that they had been planning. When no pretext could be found, they simply concocted one and invaded in June 1982. They had full American support, incidentally. That was the Lebanese war.

After that they attempted to consolidate their position in southern Lebanon and would have done so had it not been for the resistance in the south. Here this resistance is called “terrorism.” All of that comes out of the Camp David “peace process.” It’s interesting that these elementary facts can’t be perceived by our propaganda system. It parallels the Soviet Union, I suppose, in that the propaganda system pretends or just can’t see that the Soviet Union is engaged in severe repression in Eastern Europe and an invasion of Afghanistan. They just can’t see it, or at least can’t say it. Comparably, we don’t see or can’t say these things here.

I should mention that one might ask, or any reporter who’s even moderately serious would ask, What is the attitude of the indigenous population in the occupied territories? We know that. For example, there are Israeli-run polls concerning the Camp David peace process. It turns out that the population overwhelmingly, over 90 percent, regards the Camp David peace process as detrimental to their interests. It’s obvious why, for the reasons discussed previously.

A final comment about Camp David is that on the part of this “peace process” there has been a consistent attempt, which the United States has blocked, on the part of the Arab states and the Europeans to initiate a real peace process. That began clearly in February 1971, when President Sadat of Egypt offered Israel a full peace settlement. In his proposal there was nothing offered to the Palestinians at all; they were simply ignored.

The full peace settlement was to be on the internationally recognized borders, the pre-1967 borders, with recognized borders, guaranteed security, etc. Israel refused it because they wanted to take over the territories. This was the dovish Labor government at the time. The United States backed them in that refusal. That’s remained constant until today. For example, just about a year ago Arafat offered Israel negotiations leading to mutual recognition. Of course, Israel immediately rejected it. The United States didn’t even bother to respond.

This was virtually blacked out of the American media. Today it’s as if it didn’t exist. In between that period are numerous similar cases where the United States has vetoed peace offers at the UN that came from Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and the PLO who called for a two-state settlement. Everyone recognizes this is the only peaceful settlement, which guaranteed recognized borders, etc. Repeatedly over the years the United States has refused to accept any genuine peace offer. So there is something that we might call the “peace process” except that it’s been aborted by the United States and of course rejected by Israel consistently.

It's out of history, it just doesn't exist. For example, when the *New York Times* runs a news story reporting on the history of peace efforts, as it did a couple of days ago by Thomas Friedman, their reporter in Jerusalem, none of this is mentioned, it's just down the memory hole. The only thing that exists is the American-run system, the Camp David system, which we call the peace process, which in fact is just a war process.

DB: You've said that the United States and Israel have stood in the way of an international settlement, basically on racist grounds. Although they accept the right of Israel to be a national state, primarily for Jews, they do not accept that the indigenous population has a parallel right. Why?

I think the American position is strictly racist, there's no question about it. There are two national groups which claim the right of national self-determination in what was once Palestine: there is an indigenous population, the Palestinians, and there are the settlers who partially replaced them, namely the Jewish immigrants. We accept without any question the right of the Jewish immigrants to national self-determination in Palestine and therefore we unequivocally support Israel as an expression of that national right.

However, we deny a comparable right to the indigenous population. Our current position, for example, is that we will only agree even to talk to Palestinians, the indigenous population, if they're not associated with the PLO. The PLO is plainly the organization which they recognize as the expression of their national rights. There's no doubt about this. Returning to these Israeli-run polls, something like 98 percent of the population in the occupied territories calls for an independent Palestinian state, that's what they want. Something like 86 percent of them in the latest Israeli-run poll want it to be run solely by the PLO. The rest want to see it run largely by the PLO. The same is true in the Palestinian diaspora. That's more support than the Zionist organization had among Jews in the 1940s.

If in the 1940s the United States government had said, Yes, we'll be willing to talk to Jews about Palestine, but only if they're not connected with the Zionist organization, and of course not permitting any Jewish state, that would have been regarded as racist, and correctly. I should say that the Jewish world was divided over this issue. To refuse to talk to the PLO today is to take the same stand. Again, it's kind of remarkable that American commentary cannot perceive the extraordinary racism of this position.

This racism shows up elsewhere as well. Take the way in which we react to what's happening today in southern Lebanon. The American commentary regards it as quite legitimate for the Israeli occupying army to use violence to suppress resistance. In fact, here it's sometimes even called "terror against terror," which is a term that's chilling. That's the name of an organization set up by the Gestapo to attack the European resistance. We use it without any qualms to refer to what's going on in southern Lebanon, except we support it. Even when it reaches the point of Israel murdering CBS reporters, as happened a couple of days ago, the president gets on television and says, This is perfectly fine, they were just doing it in self-defense, etc. There's no comment on this in the press as yet.

Take the commentary on Israel's forced withdrawal from the south, which is being forced by local resistance. There are anguished stories in the media about the traumatic consequences for the people of northern Galilee, who will once again be under rocket fire from Lebanon. The border was completely peaceful for a year before Israel attacked, and the rocket fire, as I mentioned, was in retaliation to Israeli bombing. Murder of Arabs is considered a perfectly legitimate occupation. Israel killed dozens, maybe hundreds of local people, Lebanese, in its so-called "iron fist" operations in the last months. This included real terrorist acts like breaking into hospitals, taking people away who are trying to give blood to people wounded in Israeli attacks, beating up a hospital director, real barbarism. That's considered legitimate. It's their right to use military force in another country to suppress the local population.

Another aspect of the same racism shows up quite dramatically in our diplomatic stance, our refusal to recognize that the indigenous population has the rights that we naturally accord to the Jewish settlers who immigrated to the country. It's even reached the point that in the United States there's a pretense that the indigenous population didn't exist. There's a rather comical incident in the last year that involves a completely fraudulent book [*From Time Immemorial*] by Joan Peters which became a bestseller in the United States. Virtually every review of it here was extremely laudatory. The book claims that the Palestinians didn't exist. It's a concoction of lies and distortions. As soon as the publishers made a tactical error and allowed it to appear in England where the intelligentsia are not so totally controlled on this issue, it was immediately blasted out of the water. Every review pointed out grotesque errors and ridiculous fabrications. But here it was accepted

as gospel truth because it says what we want to hear. If the Palestinians didn't exist, that justifies our racist attitudes toward them.

DB: June 1985 is the third anniversary of the "Peace for Galilee," the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. What has Israel accomplished in Lebanon?

It accomplished quite a bit. The main purpose of Israel in Lebanon is revealed by their own statements. For example, Prime Minister Shamir pointed out that Israel faced a real danger in Lebanon before 1982. He then went on to explain that it was not a military but a political danger, that the PLO had scrupulously adhered to the ceasefire and had increased its attempts to lay the basis for a political settlement. That's a danger, because if there is to be a political settlement and the Palestinians are to be recognized as participants, then Israel will not be able to maintain its control over the occupied territories and will have to settle for peace and peaceful integration into the region, which it does not want to do. So there was a political danger, as Shamir pointed out. One of the best Israeli journalists, a well-known Israeli satirist, B. Michael, had an article right after Shamir's statement in which he stated, "Thank God there's no one to talk to." Israel did succeed in eliminating this political threat. The attack on the Palestinians, which meant the destruction of organized Palestinian society, that was the purpose of the war, was successful. Organized Palestinian society was destroyed, the PLO was somewhat marginalized, and the danger of a political settlement reduced.

Israel had further goals, namely to essentially take over Lebanon and install there what they called a "new order" which would mean a client regime based on right-wing Christians and selected privileged Muslim elites. This is sometimes called Sharon's plan, and now people denounce it because Sharon was so terrible. But it should be remembered when it looked as though that plan was going to be successful, in late August 1982, after the savage bombings of Beirut and the destruction of southern Lebanon, the popular support for it in Israel was enormous. Support for Likud, Begin, and Sharon reached about 80 percent, which was totally unprecedented in Israel. It was only when the plan began to fall apart that opposition developed. That was the large plan, namely the establishment of a client state based on those Christian and selected Muslim elements. That failed. They were unable to do that, for a number of reasons, one of them being the intense resistance in the south.

In fact, in the south Israel has suffered its first military defeat ever. It has been compelled by local resistance to partially withdraw from

southern Lebanon. I don't believe it really intends to withdraw. What they're intending to do is to hold on to as much of southern Lebanon as they can, and that will take violence, because the local population does resist. But they'll do that. There may be moves toward trying to depopulate southern Lebanon if that's necessary, as they did along the Jordan Valley in the late 1960s. They'll maintain a foothold there, I would imagine, at least if the United States supports them.

DB: Can you talk about the problems of discussing Israeli policies in the United States without being labelled "anti-Semitic"? You, for example, speak out frequently, and you've written many books. Have you personally encountered any difficulties?

I can't be called "anti-Semitic," because I'm Jewish, so there's another label that's used. These are used by people who call themselves "supporters of Israel." Actually they are the real enemies of Israel. They're supporting the development of what I have described, the development of a militarized, unviable society geared toward war and subservient to American interests. That's not support for Israel in any meaningful sense. People who call themselves "supporters of Israel" have two categories with which they try to silence criticism. One is "anti-Semite," the other is "self-hating Jew." That takes care of everyone. You're either an anti-Semite or a self-hating Jew if you don't follow the party line strictly.

These tactics run across the board, so it's not just right-wing extremist Israeli circles, or supporters of Israel here that adopt that position, but also people like Abba Eban, a Labor dove, who have explicitly stated that the task of Israeli agitprop is to make it clear that any criticism of Israel is either anti-Semitism or the position of self-hating Jews. In the United States a rather effective system of intimidation has been developed to silence critique. Let me just give you one example: Take the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith, which is reputed to be a civil rights organization.

It's rather comical. It's actually an organization devoted to trying to defame and intimidate and silence people who criticize current Israeli policies, whatever they may be. For example, I myself received, through a leak in the New England office of the Anti-Defamation League, a copy of my file there. It's 150 pages, just like an FBI file, interoffice memos warning that I'm going to show up here and there, surveillance of talks that I give, comments and alleged transcripts of talks. They're mostly fabricated because people don't hear or can't understand. This

material has been circulated. If I'm going to give a talk somewhere, this material would be sent to some local group which would use it to extract defamatory material which would then be circulated, usually in unsigned pamphlets outside the place where I'd be speaking.

I happened to get this material when it was being sent to Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz in preparation for a debate that we were to have a few days later, so that he would be able to extract from it defamatory material concocted by the Anti-Defamation League surveillance system. Which is in fact exactly what he did. This is typical of the way they act. If there's any comment in the press which they regard as insufficiently subservient to the party line, there'll be a flood of letters, delegations, protests, threats to withdraw advertising, etc. The politicians of course are directly subjected to this, and they are also subjected to substantial financial penalties if they don't go along. The Israeli press is very open about this.

For example, after the last election, there was an article in one of the major Israeli journals by a very good journalist named Yoav Karni. The headline of the article was actually a pun. It reads in Hebrew "Jewish money buys the vote," but it could also be read as "Jewish money buys everything." That was the headline. Then came a report of a speech by Thomas Dine, head of the Israeli lobbying group in Washington, AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee], in which he just gloated over the successes of the Jewish political lobby, the Israeli political lobby here, in controlling the American congressional elections. He said that their major achievement was to eliminate Senator Charles Percy, who was too critical of Israel. He went on to say that they felt that, through electoral victories, they had Congress in their pocket until the year 2000. If this appeared somewhere in the United States it would be regarded as some kind of fanatic, anti-Semitic publication, sort of like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. But this is a Hebrew article in the Hebrew press. I should mention that the journalist was appalled by all of this. He said it was a real threat to American democracy. But here the Israeli lobbying groups regard it as a great success and they are quite proud of it, though, of course, they don't publicly say the things that they say privately.

This is a very effective system, particularly since there's no counterweight to it. There's no pressure on the other side. There is a very broad international consensus, and there has been for many years, over a political settlement to the dispute. It's essentially a two-state

settlement which would recognize the national rights of both Jews and Palestinians. It's supported by most of the world. It's blocked by the United States, who leads the rejectionist camp. But the point is that there's no articulate voice here expressing anything like the international consensus. There's no articulate voice here opposing repression and atrocities conducted quite freely by Israel, which encourages them to go on and do more of it. That's one of the reasons why they're capable of such really barbaric actions in south Lebanon. They've never been criticized in the past, why should it begin now? There's occasional criticism when things really get out of hand, like the Sabra and Shatila massacres, but that's quickly silenced and things return to their norm. This is a totally one-sided pressure and system of vilification, lying, defamation, and judicious use of funds in the political system, that has created a highly biased approach to the whole matter and is why the United States can continue to block a political settlement. The system of military confrontation, a very dangerous one that repeatedly threatens global war, is maintained with complete impunity. There's no internal criticism here.

DB: What about genuine Israeli fears? You're quite familiar with the level of lexical violence from Arabs and others talking about Israel as a "cancer in the Middle East" that needs to be "exterminated" and "eliminated."

First of all, I'm not familiar with those, because they're mostly fabricated. They did exist, primarily in the 1960s, but since early 1970, most of the Arab world has been quite willing to reach an accommodation with Israel. This was explicit in the case of Egypt in 1971; Jordan in 1971 made a similar proposal. I don't want to bother going through the whole diplomatic record here, which I reviewed in *The Fateful Triangle*, not too long ago. Through the 1970s there were repeated Arab offers, Egypt, Syria, the PLO, Saudi Arabia, and others, to arrange for a political settlement in accord with the international consensus. There is talk about a "cancer," and so on, but that typically comes from Israeli sources. Israel typically refers to the PLO as a "cancer" which is "metastasizing" and a "disease" which has to be stamped out, etc.

DB: Gideon Hausner said that.

Yes, who was the prosecutor in the Eichmann trial, the person who used this terminology which is in fact rather reminiscent of Eichmann himself. However, I wouldn't downplay the threat to Israel, I think it's

real. As long as military confrontation persists, Israel is in real danger of destruction, there's no doubt about that. My own feeling is that they're heading for destruction. They happen to be the dominant military force in the region now, but there's no guarantee that that will persist. In a system of continued and unending military confrontation, sooner or later they're going to lose. Military intelligence is a very low-credibility operation. It rarely knows what it's talking about. Modern history shows that quite well. They may think that they're in a position of military dominance, and they may find that they're wrong. Unexpected things do happen in the case of war. They came close to being destroyed in 1973 after two years of rejecting Sadat's peace offers. However, they have not learned the lesson from that. The lesson plainly is that if they want to maintain control of the occupied territories and they want to keep harassing the northern border, then they're going to be in a situation of permanent military confrontation. That's going to mean repeated chance of war and sooner or later destruction. So the threats are very real, except that I think that by now a lot of these threats are self-generated.

DB: A central thesis of your book The Fateful Triangle is that although the United States claims to be the friend of Israel, the policy it's pursuing will ultimately destroy it.

I think that's true. I think it's even more dramatically true of the people who call themselves supporters of Israel. I should say that this view is shared very widely by the small group of Israeli doves. They put things in terms much more extreme and harsh than I would use. For example, take Meir Pail, who's a real member of the Israeli establishment. He's a retired colonel, a well-known military historian, formerly a leading military strategist in the army. He was head of the officer's training school in the Israeli army, straight out of the establishment. He had an article about a year ago in which he was attacking the American Jewish community. I think he was targeting it too narrowly. The title of the article was "Zionism and the Danger of Cancer." He said that the danger was coming from the American Jewish community, that what they want is an Israel which is a "war god similar to Mars." They get their psychological thrills from seeing Israel, a superman, stomping on people's faces. He went on to say that the attitude of the American Jewish community and their monolithic support for these tendencies in Israel and their intolerance of any discussion and debate of them

are going to create an Israel which “will be a new development in political history, a combination of the worst features of South Africa and Northern Ireland.” He virtually pleaded with the American Jewish community to stop what they call support for Israel, which is, in fact, driving it in this direction.

As I say, those are terms much more extreme than I would use, and they come from a mainstream Israeli establishment figure who happens to be a dove. I think he’s much too narrowly focused when he talks about the American Jewish community. That’s what they tend to see. In fact, the support for that kind of policy in the United States is only very partially based on the American Jewish community. It’s far broader than that.

DB: There seems to be much more pluralism and political diversity in Israel on some of these issues than in the United States itself.

There’s no doubt of that. For the Jewish population of Israel, let’s put aside the Arab citizens, it achieves a level of democracy that’s well beyond that of the United States. These issues in particular are commonly debated in Israel. In the United States they’re so marginalized as to be nonexistent. Again, to take a personal case, I can virtually not publish in the United States on these topics, but I’ve been asked by mainstream Israeli journals to write regular articles for them.

DB: You read Hebrew and you closely follow Israeli press and politics. Do you see any signs in Israel today that point toward a two-state settlement?

There can be no signs in Israel, for a very simple reason. Israel is so utterly dependent on the United States at this point that no group can attain any degree of credibility in Israel unless it has substantial American support. That’s one of the reasons that people like Meir Pail and others like him are so upset by the monolithic and chauvinistic and rather hysterical tendencies in the United States on this issue. They know that unless some American support develops for a political settlement, then those groups within Israel, and they certainly exist, that regard current developments as dangerous and intolerable, will have no domestic support. In fact, that’s correct. Let’s take a look at the current Knesset, the parliament. I’d suppose maybe 10 percent of its members would tend to support some sort of political settlement of the kind that corresponds to the international consensus. That’s a rather optimistic appraisal. It may be much less than that. Explicitly committed to that

are a smaller group. If American support, however, developed for a political settlement, then such tendencies would develop in Israel in this direction too.

DB: Can you make some suggestions as to what people can do to become aware of this issue and effect some movement in US foreign policy vis-à-vis Israel?

This is one of the easier questions. To change American policy with regard to, say, Central America, would be extremely difficult because the United States has a longtime historic interest in violence and repression in Central America and we're not going to give it up easily. But in the case of the Middle East I think it would be quite an easy thing to do. Even though there's virtually no articulate voice in the United States in support of the international consensus on a political settlement, polls nevertheless indicate that a large percentage of the population—in many polls up to two-thirds or three-quarters of the population—support a Palestinian state. That is, they believe that the indigenous population should have the right of national self-determination alongside of Israel. That means that there's a potential popular support. Within elite planning groups there's a real sharp division on this topic.

There are people who feel that we should maintain Israel as a strategic asset and a base for projection of American power and a source of violence and threat to intimidate the region. There are many other people, including people who represent quite powerful economic and political interests in the United States, who believe to the contrary that we should go along with the international consensus and try to reach an authentic political settlement. George Ball is a good example of a spokesman for this point of view. A recent book of his, *Error and Betrayal in Lebanon*, which I'm sure will never be reviewed here, is a good, clear, lucid, and I think quite persuasive exposition of this point of view. This is not an open political issue in the United States, and I think this is one of the rare cases where virtual domination, total domination of articulate expression of the media, the books, schools, the whole ideological system, the domination of that by one extremist position has in fact shifted the political balance very radically.

The potential split among dominant American elites has not even emerged into policy, because the ones who support the hawkish, extremist, violent policy have almost total support in articulate opinion. That can be changed if people are willing to face the intimidation apparatus which will be unpleasant. It's unpleasant to have mud thrown

at you and be denounced, etc. But if you're willing to face that and to do some self-education, and the facts are available, and then some real education of others, organizing and so on, I think that political pressures can be developed to make it possible for congressional representatives and for the press, this means pressure on the press, too, to take a stance which at least recognizes reality. And also to effect political decisions and to move the United States toward joining what is a very broad international consensus on this issue. That could happen. It's easily within range. It would have large-scale support even among powerful American interests. In this respect it's quite different, an easier task, than what faces people who are trying to change the American policy of organized violence in Central America.

3

TERRORISM: THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE

October 24, 1986

DB: To what extent does the control of language shape and form our perceptions and understanding of reality?

There are obvious examples. One important fact to bear in mind when one listens to or is subjected to political discourse is that most terms are used in a kind of a technical meaning that's very much divorced from their actual meaning, sometimes even the opposite of it. For example, take a term like "national interest." It is commonly used as if it's something good for us, and people are supposed to understand that. So if a political leader says that "I'm doing this in the national interest," you're supposed to feel good because that's for you. However, if you look closely, it turns out that the national interest is not defined as what's in the interest of the entire population; it's what's in the interests of a small group of dominant elites who happen to be able to command the resources that enable them to control the state—basically, corporate-based elites. That's what's called the "national interest."

Correspondingly, the term "special interests" is used in a related way, to refer to the general population. The population are called the "special interests" and the corporate elite are called the "national interest." You're supposed to be in favor of the national interest and against the special interests.

This became very clear in the last few presidential campaigns. The Reagan administration is largely a figment of the public relations industry. The public relations aspects of it, including control over language, are very striking—it's a professional public relations outfit.

It was interesting to see how the choice of terms they use was carefully crafted. In both the 1980 and 1984 elections, they identified the Democrats as the “party of special interests,” and that’s supposed to be bad, because we’re all against the special interests. But if you look closely and ask who were the special interests, they listed them: women, poor people, workers, young people, old people, ethnic minorities—in fact, the entire population. There was only one group that was not listed among the special interests: corporations. If you’ll notice the campaign rhetoric, that was never a special interest, and that’s right, because in their terms that’s the *national* interest. So if you think it through, the population are the special interests and the corporations are the national interest, and since everyone’s in favor of the national interest and against the special interests, you vote for and support someone who’s against the population and is working for the corporations.

This is a typical case of the way the framework of thought is consciously manipulated by an effective choice and reshaping of terminology so as to make it difficult to understand what’s happening in the world. A very important function of the ideological institutions—the media, the schools, and so on—is to prevent people from perceiving reality, because if they perceived it they might not like it and might act to change it. That would harm privileged people who control these things.

DB: Perhaps it’s as George Orwell wrote in his essay “Politics and the English Language,” that “In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible.”

Yes, he gave interesting examples which are now classic, like the term “pacification.” It is used for mass murder; thus we carried out “pacification” in Vietnam. If you look at what the pacification programs were, they were literally programs of mass murder to try to suppress and destroy a resisting population. Orwell wrote long before Vietnam, but he already noted that pacification was being used that way; by now it’s an industry.

It’s the same with every term you can think of. Take the term “conservative.” Conservative is supposed to be a good thing, and this is supposed to be a conservative administration. A true conservative like, say, Robert Taft, would turn over in his grave to see what’s being called conservative. Everything the conservatives have always fought against is being advanced by this administration. It’s in favor of extending the power of the state and increasing the intervention of the state in the

economy. State power has increased faster under this administration than under any since the Second World War. It's also interested in protecting the state against its citizens, cutting down access to the state, controlling thought, controlling expression, attacking civil liberties, attacking individual rights. It's the most lawless administration we've ever had. All of these things are anathema to conservatives. Conservatives want the opposite in every respect, so naturally they call the administration conservative, and if you like it you're supposed to be conservative.

These are all ways of undermining the possibility of independent thought, by eliminating even the tools that you can use to engage in it.

DB: The power of naming seems to be crucial in this whole process.

These are all examples of it. Language is, after all, a tool for thought. If you debase the language, you debase the thought. I don't want to exaggerate this element of it, but it is one element, and one that's certainly consciously manipulated in order to introduce confusion and lack of perception.

DB: In recent years, starting in the 1970s, continuing through the 1980s and for the foreseeable future, the term "terrorism" has become a dominant issue, a theme and focus for the media and politicians. I wonder if you could talk about the word itself. It seems to have undergone a curious transformation in the last couple of centuries.

It definitely has, it's a very interesting case. The word "terrorism" came into general use at the end of the eighteenth century, and it was then used to refer to acts of violent states that suppressed their own populations by violence. Terror was the action of a state against its own citizens. That concept is of no use whatsoever to people in power. So, predictably, the term has come to be changed. Now it's the actions of citizens against states; in fact, the term "terrorism" is now almost entirely used for what you might call "retail terrorism": the terrorism of small, marginal groups, and not the terrorism of powerful states.

We have one exception to this: if our enemies are involved in terrorism, then you can talk about "state terrorism." So there are really two things that define terrorism. First, it's done against states, not by states against their citizens, and it's done by them, not us. So, for example, take Libya. Qaddafi is certainly a terrorist. The latest edition of the Amnesty International publication, *Political Killings by Governments*, lists Qaddafi as a terrorist; he killed fourteen people, Libyans, mostly in Libya, in

the 1980s. There may be a handful of others, but even taking the most extreme estimate it couldn't be more than several dozen, probably less. That's terrorism, and he's therefore the "Mad Dog of the Middle East" and the "King of International Terrorism." That's because he meets our criteria: he's them, not us, and the terrorism that one talks about is carried out generally by small groups, not by one of our major states.

Let's compare it with El Salvador. In the same years in which Libya killed fourteen, maybe twenty people, mostly Libyans, the government of El Salvador slaughtered about fifty thousand people. Now that's not just terrorism, that's international terrorism, because it was done by us. We instituted the government as much as the Russians instituted the government in Afghanistan. We created the army, a terrorist army; we supplied, organized, and directed it. The worst atrocities were carried out by American-trained elite battalions fresh from their training. The US Air Force participated directly in coordinating bombing strikes—the terror was not ordinary killing. Libyan terror is bad enough; they kill people. But our terrorists first mutilate, torture, rape, cut them to pieces—it's hideous torture, Pol Pot-style. That's not called terrorism. El Salvador is not called a terrorist state. José Napoleón Duarte has presided over all this, who has perceived his role from the beginning as ensuring that the murderers are supplied with weapons, and that nothing will interfere with the massacre which he knew was coming when he joined the military junta. He's called a great liberal hero, and El Salvador is considered a kind of magnificent triumph of democracy. Here's a major terrorist state—Libya is a very, very minor terrorist state—but we see it the other way around. "Terrorism" is used for them, not us. In the case of El Salvador it's plainly being done by a major state against its own citizens—in fact a state that we established, a client state of the United States. Therefore it can't be terrorism, by definition.

This is true in case after case. My book about it, *Pirates and Emperors*, takes its title from a rather nice story by St. Augustine in his *City of God*. St. Augustine describes a confrontation between King Alexander the Great and a pirate whom he caught. Alexander the Great asks the pirate, "How dare you molest the sea?" The pirate turns to Alexander the Great and says, "How dare you molest the whole world? I have a small boat, so I am called a thief and a pirate. You have a navy, so you're called an emperor." St. Augustine concludes that the pirate's answer was excellent. That's essentially the story. Retail terrorism directed

against our interests is terrorism; wholesale terrorism carried out for our interests isn't terrorism.

The same is true in the Middle East region. In case after case, this is the way the term is used, and very effectively. In fact, it was very predictable that the Reagan administration would take international terrorism to be the core of its foreign policy, as it announced right off. The reason was that the administration made it very clear that it was going to be engaged in international terrorism on a massive scale, and since it's going to be engaged in international terrorism, naturally, in a good public relations-directed world, you start off by saying that you're opposed to international terrorism. That shifts attention away from the crucial issue: that you're going to maximize international terrorism.

DB: Why the tremendous fascination with terrorism—the TV specials, the articles, the documentaries, the symposia, the conferences, and on and on—is there something deeper that's being touched by this?

Oh, yes, very deep. It's very close to the Reagan administration's domestic policies. It's important to remember that the Reagan administration's policies are extremely unpopular, and for obvious reasons. The polls show this very clearly; on just about every major issue the public is strongly opposed to the Reagan programs. Take, say, social spending vs. military spending. When the question is asked in polls: Would you prefer to have a decrease in welfare payments or in military spending?, the overwhelming majority of the population supports social spending and opposes military spending. In fact, much of the population is quite willing to see taxes raised to improve social spending. The same is true on just about every issue. On intervention abroad (in other words, international terrorism, if we were to be honest), the population is strongly against it, by large majorities. The Reagan administration is for it. On the nuclear freeze, the public is overwhelmingly in favor of it; the figure is something like three to one. The administration is against it. And so on. As you go down the line, every major policy program is unpopular. This is a problem, of course; you've got to control the population. There is a classic answer to this problem: you frighten them.

Let me just go back to another step of the Reagan program which is even more obvious: an essential part of the Reagan program was to try to transfer resources from the poor to the rich. Now, that's going to be unpopular, and the attack on social spending is a part of it. Much of the Reagan program is turning an increasingly powerful state into a welfare

state for the rich. The military program is very largely for that purpose. That's a forced public subsidy to advanced industry, again unpopular, and you can't present it in these terms. What do you do? You have to get the public lined up. They oppose your policies. There's only one way to deal with this; every leader throughout history has understood it. You've got to frighten them, make them think their lives are at stake, that they've got to defend themselves, and then they'll accept these programs that they despise or dislike as an unfortunate necessity.

How do you terrify people? Again, there's a classic answer: you find some "Evil Empire" that threatening to destroy them. In our case, it's now the Soviet Union; it used to be the Huns, before that, the British, and so on. But since the Bolshevik Revolution it's been the Soviet Union that's threatening to destroy us. So that's the Evil Empire. But here you run into a problem. Confrontations with the Evil Empire are dangerous. That's a big, powerful state; it can fight back, and you don't want to get involved with them because you might get hurt. So what you have to do is have confrontations, but not with the Evil Empire—that's too dangerous. The best way is to have confrontations with groups that you designate as "proxies" of the Evil Empire. What you try to do is to find essentially defenseless countries or groups that can be attacked at will, and designate them to be proxies of the Evil Empire, and then you can defend yourself against them by attacking them. Libya, for example, is perfect for this purpose. It has loose associations with the Soviet Union. It's a minor actor in the world of international terrorism. Against the background of anti-Arab racism, which is rampant in the United States—it's the last legitimate form of racism—you can easily talk about the Mad Dog and how he ought to get down from the trees and all this kind of stuff. That works, that scares people.

Furthermore, if you can manage to elicit terrorism, which some of our acts have done, that will really frighten people, since that strikes at home. In fact, actual terrorism is very slight; you're much more likely to be hit by lightning. But people can get scared, and a confrontation with Libya is cheap. You can kill Libyans at will; they can't fight back, it's a tiny, defenseless country, we can beat them up every time we feel like it. It will make people here feel that somehow our courageous cowboy leader is defending us from these monsters who are going to destroy us, most of which is a public relations concoction. In fact, throughout the history of the Reagan administration there has been a sequence of carefully concocted, fraudulent incidents created

to give us an opportunity to attack and kill Libyans, always for some specific political purpose at home, like building up support for the rapid deployment force, an intervention force in the Middle East or gaining support for contra aid, or one thing or another. They're very carefully timed, as I said; this is a public relations administration. Their genius is manipulation of the public; that's what they're good at. The spring of 1986, for example, was a brilliant exercise in public relations—

DB: The bombing of Libya . . .

—and the impact, the pretext for it was fabricated. It was covered up by the media, which know the true story but will not report it. It terrified the domestic population—people wouldn't even go to Europe, they were so scared, which is ludicrous. You're a hundred times as safe in any European city as in any American city—but people were so terrified they stayed at home. If you can terrify the domestic population then they'll support things like Star Wars or whatever lunacy comes along in the belief that you have to defend yourself. Crucially, you can't have confrontations with the Russians; they can fight back. So you've got to find somebody you can beat up at will: Grenada, Libya, Nicaragua, anybody who can't fight back. That's what you need.

This is, incidentally, understood very well abroad. When you read the foreign press, they regularly comment on the thuggishness and the cowardice of this administration, the sort of “bully on the block mentality”: you find somebody little enough to beat up and you go send your goon squads to beat him up, that's essentially their style. But here somehow people can't see it.

DB: This retail minor-actor terrorism you've been talking about—when it's presented in the media it occurs ahistorically: it has no context, it's totally irrational, so it seems that the logical response would be one of loathing and fear, and it's very effective.

That's right. Most of the retail terrorism—what is called “terrorism” in the United States—comes out of Lebanon, and that started in 1982. It was a very marginal phenomenon before that, a major phenomenon, mainly in Europe, after 1982; so plainly something must have happened in 1982 to cause terrorism to start coming out of Lebanon. During that year, with enthusiastic American support, Israel attacked Lebanon. The purpose of the Israeli attack was to demolish the civilian society of the Palestinians so as to ensure Israeli control over the West Bank, and in

the process the Palestinian community was destroyed, and Lebanon, already in bad shape, got the final blow.

The United States supported it all the way. We vetoed UN resolutions trying to stop the aggression, we supplied Israel with arms, diplomatic support, the whole business, and naturally it was perfectly predictable that that was going to evoke international terrorism. You cut off every political option for people and they are going to turn to terrorism. And I should say that this was well understood in Israel. Here you can't talk about it, because we're a much more indoctrinated country, but in Israel, which is a more democratic society—at least for the Jewish majority—this was openly discussed. For example, the current prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir, pointed out that there was a threat to Israel from the Palestinians, but said it was a political, not a military threat. The threat was that they would compel Israel to enter into a political settlement that it didn't want, and that had to be stopped.

Israel's and perhaps the world's leading specialist on the Palestinians, a professor at Hebrew University named Yehoshua Porath, wrote an analysis shortly after the invasion, a long, detailed article in *Ha'aretz*, Israel's major newspaper (kind of like the *New York Times*), in which he explained what he thought, very plausibly, the invasion was about. He said, and I'm paraphrasing: Look, here's the situation. For the last year, the PLO has not engaged in any cross-border terrorism. Israel has tried to get them to do it, we have continually bombed them and murdered them and so on to try to evoke some response across the border, but they haven't done it. They've kept discipline despite the fact that we've bombed them, killing dozens of people and so forth. This is a veritable catastrophe for the Israeli leadership, since if the PLO continues to maintain this posture of not engaging in cross-border terrorism and demanding a diplomatic settlement, Israel might be driven to a political settlement, which it does not want. In a political settlement it would have to give up control of the occupied territories. What the Israeli leadership wants is to return the PLO to much earlier days when it engaged in random terrorism, a PLO that will hijack airplanes, kill many Jews and be a source of loathing and horror throughout the world. They don't want a peaceful PLO that refuses to respond to Israeli terrorist attacks and insists on negotiation. That's what the invasion will achieve.

Others also commented in the same way, and that's a very plausible analysis. I presume that's what the planners in the Reagan administration wanted, too. From their point of view, terrorism coming out of Lebanon

is very beneficial. It frightens the American population. Terrorist acts are indeed loathsome, and if you cut people off from every possible option, you can predict pretty well that that's what they're going to do. So let's take, for example, the Karachi hijacking. It appears—we don't know for sure—as if the hijackers were victims of the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Everybody knows what that was. That's what happens—you send killers into a defenseless civilian area for the purpose of slaughtering and torturing people, and those who survive are very likely to turn to terrorism, and that's in effect what happened. People pretend they don't understand, but anyone who can look at dates can figure it out. The Lebanese-based terrorism, mainly in Europe, since 1982 is a direct, predictable, and probably desired effect of the US-backed Israeli aggression in Lebanon, which eliminated the hope of a political settlement, demolished the civilian society and the PLO—brutally, I should say—and smashed to pieces what was left of Lebanon. Every time we look at terrorism there's a context, though virtually unreported here.

There's an interesting reaction here when this is brought up: "You're justifying terrorism." I'm not justifying terrorism; justification and explanation are two different things. What you're pointing out is that there's an explanation for terrorism, and if you want to stop it you look at the explanation. When you look at the explanation you quite often find that violent, powerful states try to evoke terrorism because it's in their interest. That's no justification; it's an explanation. Terrorist acts are indeed loathsome. It was loathsome when Leon Klinghoffer was thrown off a boat in a wheelchair and killed on October 7, 1985. It was also loathsome when, a week earlier, Israel bombed Tunis and killed about seventy-five people using "smart" bombs that the United States probably supplied them. That's loathsome too. We regard one, but not the other, as terrorism, because one was retail terrorism on their side and the other wholesale terrorism on our side.

DB: That particular attack, the Tunis bombing, is, of course, always framed in the concept of retaliation; it was a response, not initiated.

Every terrorist act is *always* called retaliation. The sequence is as follows: first came a PLO attack in Larnaca, Cyprus, where three Israelis were killed. The killers were immediately caught and placed on trial; they're now in jail. About a week later came the Israeli bombing of Tunis in which, according to Israeli correspondents, about 75 people were killed, 20 Tunisians and 55 Palestinians, mostly civilians. Then, a

week after that came the Achille Lauro hijacking with the Klinghoffer assassination. All three of these things were called retaliations by the people who did them. The Larnaca, Cyprus operation was called a retaliation for a fact which is suppressed here. Namely that the Israeli navy, apparently using agents based on Cyprus, has been hijacking boats for over ten years—that's called terrorism when the other guy does it—hijacking boats in transit between Cyprus and various parts of northern Lebanon. In fact, they have often taken Palestinians off those boats and handed them over to their own Maronite allies in Lebanon, who then killed them. The PLO claimed that Larnaca was in retaliation for the many years of hijacking, which certainly happened, there's no doubt. We didn't call that retaliation, we just called it terrorism.

Then came the Israeli bombing, which they called retaliation, except with one slight problem: it was not directed against the people who carried out the terrorist attack. In fact, Israel had conceded that the people they were bombing in Tunis apparently had nothing to do with the Larnaca attack. But it was a cheap target. The people who had to do with the attack probably came from Syria, but that's not a cheap target; they can fight back. Tunis, on the other hand, is a defenseless target, so you attack it. That's the way it's done. It was done, incidentally, with the complicity of the United States. The US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean certainly had the Israeli bombers under surveillance. They claimed they couldn't see them, which was ridiculous. The Israelis had to fly all the way across the Mediterranean; they were refueled in flight, they passed by the most sophisticated radar and surveillance systems that the US government and military can establish, and somehow we claimed that they were invisible. That's nonsensical; we obviously knew they were coming, and we didn't warn Tunis. Tunis is a loyal American ally, but we didn't warn them that the killers were on the way. Anyhow, they called that a retaliation, but of course it wasn't. It had nothing to do with the attack. Then came the Achille Lauro hijacking. They called that a retaliation, namely for the Tunis bombing, and you can trace it back as far as you like, go back to the first interaction, and every step is called by the terrorists a retaliation for what came before, and in a certain sense it is. That's the cycle: repression, violence, retaliation, more retaliation, preemption, etc.

In our ideological system, we have a very simple way to handle it. When the guys we don't like do it, it's terror. When the guys we do like do it, it's retaliation.

4

THE PROPAGANDA SYSTEM

October 24, 1986

DB: You've talked extensively about the politics of language and semantics, and you've said, "We have to peel away veil after veil of distortion to see the truth." My question is, in the age of Orwell, and given the US educational system, what intellectual tools is that system providing to students to decode, decipher, and translate those Orwellian terms?

Let me first comment that, although we always, I too, call this the age of Orwell, the fact is that Orwell was a latecomer on the scene. The American public relations industry, which is a very sophisticated industry, already in the early 1920s was developing these tools, writing about them, and so on. In fact, even earlier, during the First World War, American historians offered themselves to President Woodrow Wilson to carry out a task that they called "historical engineering," meaning designing the facts of history so that they would serve state policy. That's Orwell, long before Orwell was writing. Shortly after that, American journalists like Walter Lippmann, the famous American journalist, said in 1921 that the art of democracy requires what he called "manufacture of consent," what the public relations industry calls "engineering of consent," another Orwellism meaning "thought control." The idea was that in a state in which the government can't control the people by force it had better control what they think. So, well before Orwell this was understood; the techniques were designed and had been implemented extensively.

As to what the schools teach to defend people against this, the answer is simple: zero. The schools are quite on the opposite side: they are part of the disinformation apparatus. In fact, this is well understood, too. It's even well understood by liberal intellectuals, democratic theorists,

and so on. We've discussed in another interview the example of the important study called *Crisis of Democracy*, another Orwellism meaning "beginnings of democracy," published by the Trilateral Commission, a group of international, essentially liberal elites. They are people of whom Carter was a kind of representative, along with the ones who staffed his administration. They refer to the schools as institutions responsible for "the indoctrination of the young." Of course, they're talking to one another there; that's not what you say in public. But that's the way they're understood. They are institutions for indoctrination, for imposing obedience, for blocking the possibility of independent thought, and they play an institutional role in a system of control and coercion. *Real* schools ought to provide people with techniques of self-defense, but that would mean teaching the truth about the world and about the society, and schools couldn't survive very long if they did that.

DB: C. P. Otero, who has edited a collection of your essays entitled Radical Priorities, has written in its preface, "The totalitarian system of thought control is far less effective than the democratic one, since the official doctrine parroted by the intellectuals at the service of the state is readily identifiable as pure propaganda, and this helps free the mind." In contrast, he writes, "the democratic system seeks to determine and limit the entire spectrum of thought by leaving the fundamental assumptions unexpressed. They are presupposed but not asserted."

That's quite accurate. I've also written about that many times. Just think about it. Take, say, a country which is at the opposite end of the spectrum from us domestically, the Soviet Union. That's a country run by the bludgeon, essentially. It's a command state: the state controls, everybody basically follows orders. It's more complicated than that, but essentially that's the way it works. There, it's very easy to determine what propaganda is: what the state produces is propaganda. That's the kind of thing that Orwell described in *1984*. In a country like that, where there's a kind of Ministry of Truth, propaganda is very easily identifiable. Everybody knows what it is, and you can choose to repeat it if you like, but basically it's not really trying to control your thought very much; it's giving you the party line. It's saying, "Here's the official doctrine; as long as you don't disobey you won't get in trouble. What you think is not of great importance to anyone. If you get out of line we'll do something to you because we have force."

Democratic societies can't really work like that, because the state can't control behavior by force. It can to some extent, but it's much more

limited in its capacity to control by force. Therefore, it has to control what you think. And again, democratic theorists have understood this for fifty or sixty years and have been very articulate about it. If the voice of the people is heard, you'd better control what that voice says, meaning you have to control what they think. The method Otero mentions there is one of the major methods. One of the ways you control what people think is by creating the illusion that there's a debate going on, but making sure that that debate stays within very narrow margins. Namely, you have to make sure that both sides in the debate accept certain assumptions, and those assumptions turn out to be the propaganda system. As long as everyone accepts the propaganda system, then you can have a debate.

The Vietnam War is a classic example. In the major media, the *New York Times* or CBS or whatever—in fact, all across the spectrum except at the very far-out periphery which reaches almost no one—in the major media which reach the overwhelming majority of the population, there was a lively debate. It was between people called “doves” and people called “hawks.” The people called hawks said, “If we keep at it we can win.” The people called doves said, “Even if we keep at it we probably can't win, and besides, it would probably be too costly for us, and besides maybe we're killing too many people,” something like that. Both sides, the doves and the hawks, agreed on something: we have a right to carry out aggression against South Vietnam. In fact, they didn't even admit that it was taking place. They called it the “defense” of South Vietnam, using “defense” for “aggression” in the standard Orwellian manner. We were in fact attacking South Vietnam, just as much as the Russians are attacking Afghanistan. Like them, we first established a government that invited us in, and until we found one we had to overturn government after government. Finally we got one that invited us in, after we'd been there for years, attacking the countryside and the population. That's aggression. Nobody thought that was wrong, or rather, anyone who thought that was wrong was not admitted to the discussion. If you're a dove, you're in favor of aggression, if you're a hawk you're in favor of aggression. The debate between the hawks and the doves, then, is purely tactical: “Can we get away with it? Is it too bloody or too costly?” All basically irrelevant.

The real point is that aggression is wrong. When the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia, they got away with it. They didn't kill many people, but it was wrong because aggression is wrong. We all understand that.

But we can't allow that understanding to be expressed when it relates to the violent actions of our state, obviously. If this were a totalitarian state, the Ministry of Truth would simply have said, "It's right for us to go into Vietnam, period. Don't argue with it." People would have known that's the propaganda system talking and they could have thought what they wanted. They could have seen that we were attacking Vietnam just like we can see that the Russians are attacking Afghanistan.

You couldn't permit that understanding of reality in this country; it's too dangerous. People are much more free, they can express themselves, they can do things. Therefore, it was necessary to try to control thought, to try to make it appear as if the only issue was a tactical one: Can we get away with it? There's no issue of right or wrong. That worked partially, but not entirely. Among the educated part of the population it worked almost totally.

There are good studies of this that show, with only the most marginal statistical error, that among the more educated parts of the population the government propaganda system was accepted unquestioningly. On the other hand, after a long period of popular spontaneous opposition, dissent, and organization, the general population got out of control. As recently as 1982, according to the latest polls I've seen, over 70 percent of the population still was saying that the war was, quoting the wording of the Gallup poll, "fundamentally wrong and immoral," not "a mistake." That is, the overwhelming majority of the population is neither hawks nor doves, but opposed to aggression. On the other hand, the educated part of the population, they're in line. For them, it's just the tactical question of hawk vs. dove.

This is, incidentally, not untypical. Propaganda very often works better for the educated than it does for the uneducated. This is true on many issues. There are a lot of reasons for this, one being that the educated receive more of the propaganda because they read more. Another thing is that they are the agents of propaganda. After all, their job is that of commissars; they're supposed to be the agents of the propaganda system so they believe it. It's very hard to say something unless you believe it. Other reasons are that, by and large, they are just part of the privileged elite so they share their interests and perceptions, whereas the general population is more marginalized. It, by and large, doesn't participate in the democratic system, which is overwhelmingly an elite game. People learn from their own lives to be skeptical, and in fact most of them are. There's a lot of skepticism and dissent and so on.

Here's a case which is an interesting one because, while the technique of thought control worked very effectively, in fact to virtually 100 percent effectiveness among the educated part of the population, after many years of atrocities and massacres and hundreds of thousands of people killed and so on, it began to erode among the general population. There's even a name for that: it's called the "Vietnam Syndrome," a grave disease: people understand too much. But it's very striking, very illuminating to see how well it worked among the educated. If you pick up a book on American history and look at the Vietnam War, there is no such event as the American attack against South Vietnam. It's as if in the Soviet Union, say, in the early part of the twenty-first century, nobody will have ever said there was a Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Everyone says it's a Russian defense of Afghanistan. That's not going to happen. In fact, people already talk about the Russian invasion of Afghanistan—maybe they defend it, maybe not—but they admit that it exists. But in the United States, where the indoctrination system is vastly more effective, the educated part of the population can't even see that it exists. We cannot see that there was an American invasion of South Vietnam. It's out of history, down Orwell's memory hole.

DB: Who engineers this, who pulls this off, who are the mandarins, or to use Gramsci's term, the "experts in legitimation"?

The experts in legitimation, the ones who labor to make what people in power do seem legitimate, are mainly the privileged educated elites. The journalists, the academics, the teachers, the public relations specialists, this whole category of people have a kind of an institutional task, and that is to create the system of belief which will ensure the effective engineering of consent. And again, the more sophisticated of them say that. In the academic social sciences, for example, there's quite a tradition of explaining the necessity for the engineering of democratic consent. There are very few critics of this position. Among them is a well-known social scientist named Robert Dahl who has pointed out—as is obviously true—that if you have a political system in which you plug in the options from a privileged position, and that's democracy, it's indistinguishable from totalitarianism. It's very rare that people point that out.

In the public relations industry, which is a major industry in the United States and has been for a long time, sixty years or more, this is very well understood. In fact, that's their purpose. That's one of the

reasons this is such a heavily polled society, so that business can keep its finger on the popular pulse and recognize that, if attitudes have to be changed, we'd better work on it. That's what public relations is for, very conscious, very well understood. When you get to what these guys call the institutions responsible for "the indoctrination of the young," the schools and the universities, at that point it becomes somewhat more subtle. By and large, in the schools and universities people believe they're telling the truth. The way that works, with rare exceptions, is that you cannot make it through these institutions unless you've accepted the indoctrination. You're kind of weeded out along the way. Independent thinking is encouraged in the sciences but discouraged in these areas. If people do it they're weeded out as radical or there's something wrong with them. It doesn't have to work 100 percent, in fact, it's even better for the system if there are a few exceptions here and there. It gives the illusion of debate or freedom. But overwhelmingly, it works.

In the media, it's still more obvious. The media, after all, are corporations integrated into some of the major corporations in the country. The people who own and manage them belong to the same narrow elite of owners and managers who control the private economy and who control the state, so it's a very narrow nexus of corporate media and state managers and owners. They share the same perceptions, the same understanding, and so on. That's one major point. So, naturally, they're going to perceive issues, suppress, control, and shape in the interests of the groups that they represent: ultimately the interests of private ownership of the economy—that's where it's really based. Furthermore, the media also have a market: advertisers, not the public. People have to buy newspapers, but the newspapers are designed to get the public to buy them so that they can raise their advertising rates. The newspapers are essentially being sold to advertisers via the public. Since the corporation is selling it and its market is businesses, that's another respect in which the corporate system or the business system generally is going to be able to control the contents of the media. In other words, if by some unimaginable accident they began to get out of line, advertising would fall off, and that's a constraint.

State power has the same effect. The media want to maintain their intimate relation to state power. They want to get leaks, they want to get invited to the press conferences. They want to rub shoulders with the secretary of state, all that kind of business. To do that, you've got to play the game, and playing the game means telling their lies, serving