



Noam Chomsky Interviewed by Vincent Navarro

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Interviewed by Vincent Navarro. at M.I.T., Cambridge, Massachusetts, on May 13, 2008. Vincent Navarro is Professor of Public Policy at the Pompeu Fabra University, and The Johns Hopkins University.

Vincent Navarro: Thank you so much for welcoming us here.

Noam Chomsky: Delighted to have a chance to talk to you.

VN: We are here on behalf of the Summer Progressive University of Catalonia. As I told you before the interview, the University's intention is to recover the history of Catalonia, recalling the time during the thirties when workers and academics would get together in the summer to discuss matters of interest to them. This was, of course, forbidden during the Franco dictatorship. When the left-wing parties regained the government of Catalonia in 2003, they renewed this commitment to restarting the Summer Progressive University. We would have liked you to give the inaugural address for this reopening. I'm sorry you couldn't make it. We hope you will come to visit us there some day.

NC: I hope so.

VN: I want to chat with you about yourself and about the United States. Outside the United States you are the best-known U.S. intellectual, and most people outside the country are not fully aware of what it means that the best-known U.S. intellectual seldom appears in the U.S. media. So, when we watch the major TV channels - CBS, NBC, and the many other channels - you are never there. Many people do not understand this, because the United States is frequently idealized and presented as an extremely dynamic, active democracy, and they do not fully realize how much the left is discriminated against in the United States. This discrimination occurs even

within the left of the liberal establishment. How do you respond to this? How do you explain this discrimination in most forums?

NC: I should say that the place where I am most feared and despised is probably in left liberal intellectual circles. If you want to see a graphic indication of this, take a look at one of my favorite journal covers, which is framed and posted right outside my door. It's the more or less official journal of left liberal intellectuals, The American Prospect, and the cover depicts the terrible circumstances in which they try to survive - the enormous forces that are virtually destroying them.

In the picture, two figures are depicted; two faces, sneering and angry. On one side is Dick Cheney and the Pentagon, on the other side is me. The left liberal intellectuals are caught between these two huge forces. This depiction is indicative of the paranoia and concern that there might be some small break in orthodoxy. The liberal intellectuals (and not just in the United States) are typically the guardians at the gates: we'll go this far, but not one millimeter farther; and it's terrifying to think that somebody might go a millimeter farther. This extends throughout the major media too. So, yes, the United States is a very free country, in fact it's the freest country in the world. I don't think freedom of speech, for example, is protected anywhere in the world as much as it is here. But it's a very managed society, it's a business-run society, carefully managed, with strict doctrinal requirements and no deviation tolerated - this would be too dangerous.

One of the reasons it's too dangerous is that the political establishment, both political parties and the political class, is, on many major issues, well to the right of the population. On health care, for example, which you've written about for decades, the population is to the left of the establishment, and has been so forever. And the same is true for many other issues. So, permitting issues to be discussed is threatening, and permitting deviation from a kind of party line is dangerous and has to be carefully controlled.

So, yes, this is a very free country, but at the same time there's a very rigid ideology.

VN: But this is surprising because, from outside the United States, one has the impression the country has a very secure, stable political system. One would think that, with such powerful political and media establishments, they could afford to allow more critical voices in the media.

NC: Yes!

VN: It's as if they are afraid of critical voices, such as your voice.

NC: Yes, I think they are afraid. There's a terrible fear that a slight deviation might lead to disaster. It's a typical totalitarian mentality. You have to control everything. If anything is out of control, it's a disaster. And, in fact, the stability of U.S. society is not so obvious. It requires a lot of suppression - the Pentagon Papers are quite interesting in this respect. The Pentagon Papers are not declassified documents. Getting access to them is like stealing the archives; it's like conquering a country and stealing the archives. The information wasn't intended for the public. There are a few interesting things in the Pentagon papers that are suppressed - not formally, but in effect. The most interesting is the account at the very end - the period they cover ends in mid-1968, right after the Tet offensive in January 1968, which convinced the business classes that the war was too costly, not worth pursuing. But, in those next

few months there was an attempt by the government to send an extra 200,000 troops to Vietnam, to raise the troop level to almost three-quarters of a million. There was a debate on this, as discussed in the Pentagon papers, and they decided not to do it. The reason was that they feared that if they did so, they would need the troops for civil disorder control in the United States. There would be an uprising of unprecedented proportions among young people, women, minorities, the poor, and so on. They barely had things under control at home, and any move might have led to an uprising. And this continues. You cannot let the population get out of control. It has to be tightly disciplined.

One of the reasons for the extraordinary pressure of consumerism, which goes back to the 1920s, is the recognition by the business world that unless it atomizes people, unless it drives them to what it calls the "superficial things of life, such as fashionable consumption," the population may turn on them. Right now, for example, about 80% of the U.S. population believes that the country is, in their words, run by "a few big interests looking out for themselves," not for the benefit of the population. About 95% of the population thinks that the government ought to pay regular attention to public opinion. The degree of alienation from institutions is enormous. As long as people are atomized, worried about maxing out their credit cards, separated from one another, and don't hear serious critical discussion, the ideas can be controlled.

VN: Another thing that happens abroad is the idealization of the U.S. system by the European media. For example, the presidential primaries are being portrayed in the European media as a sign of the vitality of U.S. democracy. And the Obama phenomenon is presented as being responsible for the mobilization of the masses. This is so contrary to the reality. But how do you explain this idealization of the American political scene that is so common in Europe?

NC: People have these illusions, and you have to ask, what is the source of these illusions? But it's clear what has happened, and the establishment understands it very well.

For example, on one day, called Super Tuesday, February 5th, there are a couple of dozen primaries, so there's big excitement. Take a look at the Wall Street Journal: its front page story on Super Tuesday, with a big headline, reads: "Issues recede in '08 Contest as Voters Focus on Character." Shortly after, a poll appeared, which I did not see reported, finding that three-fourths of the public want coverage of candidates' positions on issues. Exactly the opposite of the standard doctrine, expressed in the headline. That's not new. The same has been true in earlier elections. But issues are carefully kept out of sight by the party managers. It's not true that voters prefer character over issues. Voters would be perfectly happy to vote for the national health care system that they've wanted for decades. It's just that those things aren't options. The party managers - or, basically, the public relations industry that sells commodities on television and markets candidates in the same way that they market commodities. When you see an ad on television, you don't expect to learn anything from it. If we had a free market of the kind economists discuss, in which informed consumers make rational choices, General Motors would post on television the characteristics of the cars they're selling. They don't do that. What they do is try to create illusions, using complicated graphics, a famous actress driving up to heaven, or something like that. The point is to delude and marginalize the public, so that uninformed consumers will make irrational choices. When you market candidates, it's the same thing - keep away from the

issues, that's too dangerous because the public doesn't agree with you on the issues. So what you have is character, trivialities, personal issues - somebody's pastor says something, Clinton made a mistake when she talked about Bosnia. The Pew research foundation released a study of press coverage of the primaries. The top story was Rev. Jeremy Wright's sermons. Second was the role of the "superdelegates." Third was whether Obama misformulated his comment about "bitterness" of the electorate over the economy. And on down to the tenth story about Clinton's misstatement concerning Bosnia. All of the top stories listed were about marginal irrelevancies. None brought up the stand of the candidates on any issue - what the vast majority of the public wants to hear. You know, anything but the issues. So the population just doesn't know what the issues are, and this is quite obvious.

Popular opinion in the United States has been very well studied, mainly because the business classes, who run the country, want to have their finger on the public pulse - for the purpose of control and propaganda. You can only hope to control people's attitudes and opinions if you know a lot about them, so we know a lot about public opinion. In the last election, 2004, most Bush voters were mistaken about his views on major issues - not because they're stupid or uninterested, but because the elections are a marketing system. This is a business-run society: you market commodities, you market candidates. The public are the victims and they know it, and that's why 80% think, more or less accurately, that the country is run by a few big interests looking after themselves. So people are not deluded, they just don't really see any choices.

The Obama phenomenon is an interesting reaction to this. Obama's handlers, the campaign managers, have created an image that is essentially a blank slate. In the Obama campaign the words are hope, change, unity - totally vacuous slogans said by a nice person, who looks good and talks nicely - what commentators call "soaring rhetoric" - and you can write anything you like on that blank slate. A lot of people are writing on it their hopes for progressive change. In the campaign, as the Wall Street Journal correctly notes, issues have received little attention. Personal characteristics are the key element. It's character that's up front.

But, yes, the support for Obama is a popular phenomenon, and I think it reflects the alienation of the population from the institutions. People are grasping at a straw: here's a possibility that maybe somebody will stand up for what they want. Even though he's not saying so, he looks like the kind of person who might do it. It's quite interesting to look at the comparisons that are made. Obama is compared to John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan - Kennedy and Reagan were media constructions, Reagan particularly. He probably didn't even know what the policies were, but he was a creation of the media. He wasn't particularly popular, incidentally, but the media created the image of this wonderful cowboy who would save us, and so on and so forth.

The Kennedy administration was more in control; they were the first ruling group to understand the power of television and they created a kind of charisma through good public relations: the image of Camelot, this marvelous place, with wonderful things happening, and a great president. When you look at the actual actions, it's grotesque. Kennedy is the president who invaded South Vietnam and launched a major terrorist war against Cuba, and we could go on and on about it. His administration was responsible for establishment of the Brazilian neo-Nazi dictatorship. The coup took place right after Kennedy's assassination, but the ground was prepared by the Kennedys and led to a horrible plague of repression over Latin

America, and on and on. But the image of Camelot is there, and imagery is very important when you are trying to control a dissident population.

Actually, the United States is far from a fascist country, that's a bad analogy. But the similarity to fascist propaganda techniques is quite striking, and it's not accidental. The Nazis explicitly, consciously, and openly adopted the techniques of American commercial advertising, and said so. They took a few simple ideas, stressed them over and over again, and made them look glamorous - that was the technique of American commercial advertising in the 1920s and it was the model that the Nazis explicitly adopted, and it's the model of business propaganda today.

So, yes, the Obama phenomenon, I think, reflects the alienation of the population that you find in the polls: 80% say the country is run by a few big interests. While Obama says we are going to change that, there's no indication of what the change is going to be. In fact, the financial institutions, which are his major contributors, think he's fine, so there's no indication of any change. But if you say "change," people will grasp at it; you say "change" and "hope," and people will grasp at this and say, OK, maybe this is the savior who will bring about what we want, even though there is no evidence for it.

VN: Sure.

NC: So I think the Obama phenomenon and people's alienation go hand in hand.

VN: What would be the difference between a McCain administration and an Obama administration?

NC: McCain is another example of very effective propaganda-creation imagery. I mean, suppose there was a Russian pilot who was bombing civilian targets in Afghanistan and was shot down and tortured by the American-run Islamic fanatic terrorists there. Would we say he's a war hero? Would we say he's an expert in strategic and security issues, because he was a bomber of civilian targets? We wouldn't. But this is the image that's been created of McCain. His heroism and his expertise and strategy are based on the fact that he was bombing people from 30,000 feet and he was shot down. It's not nice that he was tortured, it shouldn't have happened, it was a crime, and so on. But that doesn't make him a war hero or a specialist in foreign policy. That's all a public relations creation. The public relations industry is a huge industry, very sophisticated. Probably something like a sixth of the gross domestic product goes into marketing, advertising, and so on, and that's a core element of society. It's the way you keep people separated from one another, subdued, and focused on something else. And this is explicit and, as I say, it's all discussed in public relations propaganda.

VN: Would you foresee any difference between McCain and Obama administrations in terms of foreign policy?

NC: Yes. McCain may be worse than Bush. He doesn't say much, because you're not supposed to say much about issues, but the few things he has said are pretty frightening. He could be a real loose cannon.

VN: Could you explain the sympathy that Europe has toward Obama?

NC: I suppose Europeans are also writing what they want on the blank slate. And it's no secret that they feared and disliked Bush. The American establishment itself was afraid of Bush. Bush came under unprecedented criticism even from officials of the Reagan administration, and from the mainstream generally. For example, when his national security strategy was announced in September 2002, calling for preventive war, virtually announcing a war in Iraq, immediately, within weeks, there was a major article in *Foreign Affairs* (the main establishment journal) condemning what they called the New Imperial Grand Strategy - not on principle, but because it would be harmful to the United States. And there has been a lot of criticism of the Bush administration as extremist, if not at the far extreme of radical nationalism, and McCain is probably in the same territory. Obama very likely would move back to the center right where the Clinton administration was.

The Bush doctrine itself, the doctrine of preventive war - you know, brazen contempt for our allies and so on - is an interesting example. The doctrine, however, was not new. Clinton's doctrine was even worse, taken literally. Clinton's doctrine officially was that the United States has the right to use force to protect access to markets and resources, and that's more extreme than the Bush doctrine. But the Clinton administration presented it politely, quietly, not in a way that would alienate our allies. The Europeans couldn't pretend they didn't hear it - of course they knew it and, in fact, European leaders probably approved of it. But the arrogance, brazenness, extremism, and ultra-nationalism of the Bush administration did offend the mainstream center in the United States and Europe. So, there's a more polite way of following the same policies.

VN: Do you see room for the left in the United States at some point?

NC: I think this country presents an enormous opportunity for organizers. You see this if you look at public opinion, which is very well studied. Your own work on people's opinion on national health programs shows that people want such a program in the United States. If we had a functioning democracy, the United States would have had a national health care system decades ago. The public has always wanted it. The same is true in foreign policy. Take Iran, the next big issue coming along. Every presidential candidate, including Obama, says we must maintain the threat of force against Iran, keep the options open. It happens to be in violation of the U.N. Charter, but elite opinion takes for granted that the United States should be an outlaw state so nobody comments on that. But this is not what the public wants. The large majority of the public says we should not make threats, we should enter into diplomacy. The large majority, about 75%, of the public, holds that Iran has the same rights as any signer of the non-proliferation treaty: the right to enrich uranium for nuclear power but not for nuclear weapons. And, strikingly, a very large majority of the public thinks we should support a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the region, including Iran, Israel, and the American forces deployed there. That happens to be Iranian official policy, too, and, in fact, the United States and England are officially committed to this position, though the facts are unmentionable. When the U.S.-U.K. tried to construct a thin legal cover for their invasion of Iraq, they appealed to U.N. Security Council Resolution 687 in 1991, which called on Iraq to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction, and they claimed it had not done so. That much was publicized, but not the fact that the same Resolution commits the signers to move to establish a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East (Article 14). But no candidate can even mention this possibility. If the United States were a functioning democracy in which public opinion influenced policy, the very dangerous confrontation with Iran might well be settled peacefully.

Also, consider Cuba. For 45 years the United States has been dedicated to punishing Cubans - we have the internal documents from the Kennedys and so on to show it. We've got to punish the Cuban people because of their "successful defiance" of U.S. policies going back to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. The Monroe Doctrine established the United States' right to run the hemisphere. The Cubans are successfully defying that, so the population must be punished by a very substantial war, a terrorist war. This aim wasn't concealed. Arthur Schlesinger, the semi-official biographer of Robert Kennedy and a Kennedy adviser, says that Robert Kennedy was put in charge of bringing "the terrors of the earth" to Cuba. This was his prime responsibility. They were fanatical about it - also about bringing economic strangulation to punish the Cuban population for its misdeed. What does the U.S. public think about this? In polls taken since the 1970s, about two-thirds of the public says we should enter into normal diplomatic relations with Cuba, just as the rest of the world does. But the fanaticism of the establishment includes the whole spectrum here - the Kennedys, the ones who started it, along with others. No political candidate will ever mention it.

The same is true for a host of other issues. So, as I say, the United States should be an organizer's paradise. I think the possibilities for the left are extraordinary, and that's one reason for the clamping down on opinion, on expression of attitudes, and so on. And, in fact, the country has a pretty activist population. There are now probably more people involved in activism on one serious issue or another than in the 1960s. It's just kind of subdued, and atomized. There are many popular movements that never existed in the past. Take, say, the solidarity movements with the third world: that's something totally new in the history of European Imperialism, and it came from mainstream America in the 1980s. Rural churches, evangelicals, people from the mainstream, thousands of people, were going to Central America to live with the victims of Reagan's terrorist wars, to help them, to try to protect them, and so on; and this was thousands or tens of thousands of people. One of my daughters is still there, in Nicaragua. This has never happened before in the history of Imperialism. Nobody from France went to live in an Algerian village to help the people, to protect them from French atrocities. It wasn't even an option that was considered, during the Indochina wars either, apart from a very scattered few. But in the 1980s this developed spontaneously - not in the elite centers, so you didn't find it in Boston, but in rural Kansas and Arizona, and it's now spread all over the world. So you have Christian peace-keepers, and heaven knows who else. Another very important new development is the international global justice movement, which is called, ridiculously, "anti-globalization."

The propaganda says that the so-called anti-globalization movement began in Seattle. It didn't. It began in the third world. When hundreds of thousands of Indian peasants storm the parliament, that's not a fact - only if people do something in a Northern city is it a fact. So the mass popular movements in Brazil and India, and so on, didn't exist until a Northern city became involved. But it did become involved, and the movement has now spread over much of the North as well all over the South.

VN: The "anti-globalization" movement has indeed been a splendid movement. But sometimes there's a feeling that maybe it's stuck and paralyzed. What do you think about the idea of establishing a Fifth International, or some form of organization that could come up with an alternative to the current worldwide system?

NC: I've talked at the meetings of the World Social Forum, which are always in the South, and I've mentioned that this movement may carry the seeds of a real International and, in my view, the first real International. What was called the First International was important, but it was highly localized. It was part of Europe, and it was essentially destroyed by Marx when he couldn't control it. The Second International collapsed before the Second World War. The Third International was taken over as a propaganda institution by the Soviet Union. And the Fourth International was marginal Trotskyite.

But this is the first authentic International, or at least it seems so. I don't mean just the World Social Forum, but, say, the Via Campesina. The last time I went to Puerto Alegre in Brazil, to attend the World Social Forum, the first place I visited was the international meeting of the Via Campesina, the international peasants' organization. It was very lively, very exciting. It represents most of the population of the world, and it was really exciting to be there. The World Social Forum, too. This is authentic globalization. These are people from all over the world, all spheres of life, interacting, discussing, and going back home and trying to implement ideas about social change.

I don't know whether the new International will fail. Perhaps. But its failure would raise the level of action for the next try. So I think it makes sense, what you say. We may see the seeds of the first authentic International, constituted by popular classes from all over, trying to overcome the extraordinary alienation that people everywhere are feeling, in the United States and elsewhere - the feeling that the institutions don't work for us, that they work for someone else. These groups may mobilize and organize, using the freedoms that we do enjoy. That's a very significant prospect.

VN: One thing that is very worrisome is the Americanization of European politics, which I think is happening everywhere. Even the European left has lost its language. For example, even left-wing leaders do not speak about the working class, but about the middle class. Class struggle has completely disappeared from left-wing discourse. So there is a very worrisome development: American political language is now appearing in Europe, coinciding with the enormous weakness of the left.

This Americanization of European political life seems paradoxical, because it is happening at the same time that U.S. influence is declining in the world. Europe is becoming more and more like the United States. Political parties, for example, have lost their potency and value. Rather than political parties, what we see is leaders' media networks. And politics becomes a show, a theatrical show. As you said earlier in our conversation, slogans are presented without any meaning. How do you explain that, at a time when U.S. influence is declining, the cultural and political values of the U.S. establishment are becoming very dominant in Europe?

NC: That's a large topic, but let's just pick a few elements. If you look over a longer historical sweep, Europe was the most savage and brutal region of the world for centuries. Establishing the nation-state system in Europe was a program of mass murder and destruction. In the 17th century, probably 40% of the population of Germany was wiped out by war. In the course of this savagery and brutality, Europe created a culture of savagery and a technology of savagery that enabled it to conquer the world. For example, Britain is a little island off the coast of Europe, but it dominated the world. And the rest of Europe didn't exactly have nice policies. A small country like Belgium was able to kill probably 10 million people in the Congo.

This, of course, was associated with racist arrogance of the most extreme kind. And it finally culminated in two world wars. Since the Second World War, Europe has been at peace, not because Europeans became pacifists, but because there was a realization that the next time they played the traditional game of slaughtering each other they would wipe out the world. They've created such a culture of savagery and technology of destruction that that game is over.

The Second World War was also a sharp shift of global power. The United States had been the most powerful economy in the world for a long time, far stronger than Europe, but it was not a major player in world affairs. It dominated the Western hemisphere and there were forays into the Pacific, but it was second to England and even France.

The Second World War changed all that. The United States profited enormously from the war, and the rest of the world was seriously harmed and destroyed. The war ended the Depression, and industrial production practically quadrupled. The United States ended the war possessing literally half the wealth of the world and with incomparable security and military force, and planners knew it. They planned for global domination in which the exercise of sovereignty by other countries would not be tolerated. The plans were developed and implemented. In Europe, at the end of the war, there was a wave of radical democracy, anti-fascism, the resistance, workers' control - some of which was quite significant — and the first task of the United States and Britain, the conquerors, was to crush it. So in country after country, Japan as well, the first task of the liberators, so-called, was to crush the resistance to fascism and restore the traditional order. Maybe not under the same name, but often under the same leaders. It was a battle that didn't happen overnight. For example, Italy was probably the main target of CIA subversion, at least into the 1970s when the record runs dry, to try to prevent Italian democracy, because this would have meant a big role for the labor movement, which couldn't be tolerated. It gradually sank in: European elites had to accept a position in which the United States would take over their traditional role of running the world by savagery and barbarism, and they would accept part of the gains that would come to the United States from global domination.

It's not that the radical democrats lost entirely in Europe - they did gain a measure of social democracy. In fact, Europeans live better than Americans in many respects: they're healthier, they're taller, they have more leisure. The United States, especially since the 1970s, has about the highest number of work hours in the industrial world, about the lowest wages, the worst benefits, and the worst health outcomes. Even if we just look at height: when an American goes to Europe, the first thing that strikes you is how tall everybody is, and it's literally true. So Europe has had many gains from its subordinate position - let the United States take the lead in destroying, massacring, and so on - and a kind of complacency has set in. There's almost a sigh of relief: after centuries of savagery and barbarism, we'll relax and follow somebody else, let them do it, and we'll just enjoy the benefits from that.

The political classes, the business classes, and so on, don't have any objection to this. What you call Americanization is really the spread of business control. The business classes are quite happy. They're closely integrated. There is some conflict, but they are really closely integrated with the United States.

If you look at the conflict, that is interesting. We supposedly have a free market, or so the ideology says. In fact, we have a state-based economic system. The dynamism of the high-tech economy comes largely from the state sector, places like where we are sitting right now [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], and then it's handed over to private capital to exploit. Sometimes it becomes almost comical. One of the leading exports is civilian aircraft. The civilian aircraft industry is now dominated by two companies, Airbus and Boeing, and they are constantly having battles in the World Trade Organization as to which one gets greater state subsidies. In fact, they are both offshoots of state power. In the United States, commercial aircraft are largely an offshoot of the Air Force and aerospace, and wouldn't exist without it.

In Europe the civilian aircraft industry has massive state subsidies. Recently, great horror was expressed in the United States over the fact that Airbus won a contract to refuel planes for the U.S. Air Force. Take a look at the contract and you'll see it's integrated: a U.S. company working together with Airbus. That's what we call a free market: state-based industries integrated with one another. But for the European business classes and American business classes this is an acceptable arrangement, and since they largely dominate their societies, it's OK. It's what the propaganda and the doctrine say, too.

I suspect that, underneath the surface, a class struggle still exists and is understood, and is ready to burst out at any moment. It's true you're not supposed to talk about it. One of my daughters teaches in a state college that has students from relatively poor families whose aspirations are to be a nurse or a policeman, or something like that, for the most part. In her first class she asks them to identify themselves, their class background, give a classifying word. Most of them have never heard this, you're not supposed to use that word. The answers that she gets are "underclass" or "middle class." If your father has job as a janitor somewhere, you're middle class. If your father is in jail, you're underclass. Those are the two classes. That's an ideological trap. The understanding that class has something to do with who gives the orders and who follows them has been driven out of consciousness, at least on the surface. But it is there, right below. As soon as you talk to working-class people, they respond quite promptly because they feel it.

VN: Thank you. I had promised not to take too much of your time. Just one last question, a personal one. A lot of people in the world thank you so much for the work you do, but where do you get your strength? How do you carry on? Here you are, in the center of the Empire, speaking quite clearly to the powerful forces and being silenced, ostracized, marginalized. Meanwhile, all over the world, people admire you, read your work, find it extremely helpful.

NC: I don't feel marginalized in the United States. When I get home tonight I will spend five hours answering e-mail, and probably several dozen letters will be invitations.

VN: I meant marginalized by the power structures.

NC: I don't care about the power structures, that's not where I live. If I wasn't their enemy I'd think something was wrong. That's why I have that picture of the magazine cover [The American Prospect] I described earlier so prominently displayed.

VN: It's the best way to indicate you're doing the right thing.

NC: Yes, that I'm doing the right thing. It's partly that. But what keeps me working is things that are illustrated by some of those photographs over there [pointing]. One shows the worst labor massacre, probably in history. In Chile, a century ago, in Iquique, miners worked the mines under indescribable conditions. They and their families marched about thirty kilometers to the town to ask for a slight increase in wages. The British mine owners welcomed them, showed them into a schoolyard, allowed them to begin their meeting, and then brought in soldiers and machine-gunned them all: men, women, children. Nobody knows how many were killed - you don't count the number of people that we kill - maybe thousands. It was a century before there was any commemoration of this. That [shown in the photograph] is a small monument, which I saw last year; it was put up by young people who are just beginning to break out of the iron grip of the dictatorship. It's not just Pinochet. Chile has a bitter history of state violence and repression. But now they're breaking out. So, yes, the atrocity took place, and now they begin to pay attention to it. That one over there [pointing] is - you know what it is, of course - a painting given to me by a Jesuit priest. On one side, Archbishop Romero, who was assassinated in 1980. In front of him, six leading intellectuals, Jesuit priests, who had their brains blown out in 1989 by U.S.-run terrorist forces who had already compiled a hideous record of massacre of the usual victims. And the Angel of Death, standing over them. That event captures Reagan - not the cheerful uncle. That's the reality of the 1980s. I just put it there to remind myself of the real world. But it's been an interesting "Rorschach" test. Almost no one from the United States knows what it is; because we're responsible for the massacre, we don't know. People from Europe, maybe 10% know what it is. From South America, I'd say, everyone knows what it is. Until recently. By now, young people often don't know because they, too, are having history driven out of their heads. History and reality are too dangerous. On the other hand, they're now coming back. The Iquique commemoration was mostly initiated by young people, rising up, wanting to recover the past, recover idealism, and do something about it. So that's enough, I would say, more than enough, to keep me going.

VN: Thank you. It has been great. You have a standing invitation to come to Barcelona and Catalonia. Thank you on behalf of millions of people.

What an INTERVIEW!!!

...it's now 8:40 a.m. here in Greece, I've been reading since 7:00 a.m. this interview, stopping every now and then to mail to friends of mine this or the other paragraph of it (e.g Chomsky's explanation of why US is an activists' nation and even more so recently; or his presentation of Europe's savagery&peacefulness; or...or....or...), maybe what I'll now say will just mean that I have not read all interviews he has given, but it's sure the greatest that I've seen among his and one of the three or four greatest I have read in all my life (given in the five last decades by people that are of the variety that I like to call "people-for-all-seasons for our season". I will put it (*i.e I do put it now*) by itself and with no other company, in the final, 12th, file (*i.e in the present file*) of my site's abstract that will be (*i.e. is*) titled "Chomsky-for-all-seasons for our season" and that will be it for the completion of an abstract that started with a file on Mumford titled "Thinker-for-all-seasons for our season"; the best round-off for that site after all my wonderings about how I would end it by the end of this summer...Thinking back to it, for the way this interview was able to bring out so well the vibes of Chomsky's presence that at depth are always there in his interviews and became such an excellent snapshot of Chomsky's mind and soul we sure all have to thank Vincent Navarro who took it...Thinking even more of it I'll sure have to check out what was that progressive summer institute of Catalonia. As soon as we find out we'll make an addendum to file 7. J.A./25 July 2008

Let me repeat here verbatim some of the things Chomsky said (putting dots over some things, not because they are not the utmostly important things but because we can just go back to the previous page and reread them) there we go with one of the paragraphs that are so good that they almost bring tears to the reader's eyes:

...VN: I meant marginalized by the power structures.

NC: I don't care about the power structures, that's not where I live. If I wasn't their enemy I'd think something was wrong. That's why I have that picture of the magazine cover [The American Prospect] I described earlier so prominently displayed.

VN: It's the best way to indicate you're doing the right thing.

NC: Yes, that I'm doing the right thing. It's partly that. But what keeps me working is.....**For what's skipped see PS***.....

By now, young people often don't know because they, too, are having history driven out of their heads. History and reality are too dangerous. On the other hand, they're now coming back. The Iquique commemoration was mostly initiated by young people, rising up, wanting to recover the past, recover idealism, and do something about it. So that's enough, I would say, more than enough, to keep me going.

VN: Thank you. It has been great. Thank you on behalf of millions of people.

Yes, let's all say that again:



Thank you on behalf of millions of people.

*PS: What's skipped in * above is poetically best described by the oft quoted verses of Hikmet "talking to his cardiologist":

*"Doctor, if half of my heart is here the other half is in China,
and then, doctor, each dawn my heart gets shot in Greece"*

These verses sound applicable to Chomsky as much as to nobody else in our days.

J.A./July 25/2008