

Liberating the Mind from Orthodoxies

An interview with Noam Chomsky - By David Barsamian

Noam Chomsky, long-time political activist, writer, and professor of linguistics at MIT, is the author of numerous books and articles on U.S. foreign policy, international affairs, and human rights. Among his many books are *World Orders Old and New*, *Class Warfare*, and *Powers and Prospects*. Among his latest books are *The Common Good* and *The New Military Humanism*.

BARSAMIAN: Let's talk about propaganda and indoctrination. As a teacher, how do you get people to think for themselves? Can you impart tools that will enable that?

CHOMSKY: I think you learn by doing—I'm a Deweyite from way back. You learn by doing, and you figure out how to do things by watching other people do them. That's the way you learn to be a good carpenter, for example, and the way you learn to be a good physicist. Nobody can train you on how to do physics. You don't teach methodology courses in the natural sciences. You may in the social sciences. In any field that has significant intellectual content, you don't teach methodology. You just watch people doing it and participate with them in doing it. So a typical, say, graduate seminar in a science course would be people working together, not all that different from an artisan picking up a craft and working with someone who's supposedly good at it. I don't try to persuade people, at least not consciously. The way you do it is by trying to do it yourself, and in particular trying to show, although it's not all that difficult, the chasm that separates standard versions of what goes on in the world from what the evidence and people's inquiries will show them. A common response that I get, even on things like chat networks, is, I can't believe anything you're saying. It's totally in conflict with what I've learned and always believed and I don't have time to look up all those footnotes. How do I know what you're saying is true? That's a plausible reaction. I tell people it's the right reaction. You shouldn't believe what I say is true. Nobody is going to pour truth into your brain. It's something you have to find out for yourself.

Talk about liberating the mind from orthodoxies. Take for example, humanitarian intervention.

Humanitarian intervention is an orthodoxy and it's taken for granted that if we [the U.S.] do it, it's humanitarian. The reason is because our leaders say so. But you can check. For one thing, there's a history of humanitarian intervention. You can look at it. And when you do, you discover that virtually every use of military force is described as humanitarian intervention. The major recent academic study of humanitarian intervention is by Sean Murphy, *Humanitarian Intervention: The UN in an Evolving World Order*. He's now an editor of the *American Journal of International Law*. He points out, correctly, that before the Second World War, there was the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928 that outlawed war. Between the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the UN Charter in 1945, there were three major examples of humanitarian intervention. One was the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and north China. Another was Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, and a third was Hitler's takeover of the Sudetenland. They were accompanied by exalted and impressive humanitarian rhetoric, which as usual was not entirely false. Even the most vulgar propaganda has elements of truth. What you have to do is look at the U.S. reaction. So in the case of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and north China, the official U.S. reaction was, "We don't like it, but we don't care, really, as long as American interests in China, meaning primarily economic interests, are guaranteed."

Same with Mussolini. The State Department hailed Mussolini for his magnificent achievements in Ethiopia and also, incidentally, for his astonishing accomplishments in raising the level of the masses in Italy. This is the late 1930s, several years after the invasion. Roosevelt described Mussolini as "that admirable Italian gentleman." In 1939 he praised the fascist experiment in

Italy—as did almost everyone, it's not a particular criticism of Roosevelt—and said it had been “corrupted” by Hitler, but other than that it was a good experiment.

How about Hitler’s taking over the Sudetenland in 1938? One of Roosevelt’s major advisors was A.A. Berle. He said that there’s nothing alarming about the takeover. It was probably necessary for the Austrian Empire to be reconstituted under German rule, so it’s all right. That’s a typical remark. That’s the way every monster is described, a moderate standing between the extremes of right and left, and we have to support him, or too bad. That’s a famous remark of John F. Kennedy’s about Trujillo reported by Arthur Schlesinger, the liberal historian and Kennedy aide. Kennedy said something like, We don’t like Trujillo. He’s a murderous gangster. But unless we can be assured that there won’t be a Castro, we’ll have to support Trujillo. The threat of a good example or it’s sometimes called the virus effect. The virus of independent nationalism might succeed and inspire others. Actually, the war in Vietnam started the same way.

When you ask whether a certain action is or is not a case of humanitarian intervention, you should at least approach it with a sense of history and an understanding of what’s happened in the past. Then you have to evaluate the case on its own terms. You have to ask, for example, whether the bombing of Yugoslavia was a case of humanitarian intervention? When you ask that question, in this case, I think you find quite the opposite. The bombing was undertaken with the expectation that it would lead to a very sharp escalation of atrocities and had nothing to do with humanitarian goals. The opposite is very passionately claimed, but with no credible evidence or argument, to my knowledge.

We can ask the same question about the other main atrocity that was being carried out at the time, namely East Timor. The standard line is, even if you were opposed to the war in Yugoslavia, there’s one good thing about it, namely that it served as a precedent for the intervention in East Timor, and we all agreed that that was good. So that was one favorable thing. The only trouble with that is the facts, which are totally different. There never was any intervention in East Timor in any serious sense of the term, hence it couldn’t have been a humanitarian one. The U.S. and Britain withheld any interference with Indonesian atrocities until after the worst had taken place, continuing to support the Indonesian army. It was not until after the Indonesian army withdrew (having been informed by Clinton that the time had come) that they were willing to allow a peacekeeping force to enter. That’s not intervention.

There are some important similarities between the East Timor and Kosovo cases, the two prominent examples of humanitarian intervention at the end of the 20th century. Both in Kosovo and East Timor the U.S. is refusing to undertake constructive efforts, with marginal exceptions. In Kosovo, for example, they won’t clear the unexploded cluster bombs that are all over the place. That’s a war crime. Serbs are being tried at the international tribunal for using missiles with cluster bombs. People have been tried and convicted for that. Not NATO, of course. And the U.S. won’t clear them. It’s giving very little assistance to Kosovo. It’s somebody else’s responsibility. We bomb, but we don’t help. The same is true in East Timor. The U.S. has refused to provide aid. Trivial sums, virtually nothing. Clinton called for a reduction of the small UN peacekeeping force that might be helping to overcome our crimes. All of this passes without comment and this is supposed to be the era of humanitarian intervention, the era in which our principles and values are opening up a new world.

Or look at what’s happening not far from Kosovo. On April 1 of last year, the Turkish army initiated new ground sweeps in southeastern Turkey, in one of the regions that has been most devastated by U.S.-backed ethnic cleansing and other atrocities in the Clinton period, huge atrocities, a couple of million refugees, 3,500 villages destroyed. They also invaded northern Iraq to kill more Kurds. Almost to the minute, practically, that the Turkish offensive was beginning within Turkey, Defense Secretary Cohen was giving a talk to the American Turkish Council with a lot of laughter and applause, praising Turkey for its contributions to preventing ethnic cleansing by bombing Yugoslavia with F-16s that were either sent them by the U.S. or co-produced with the U.S. in Turkey and were, incidentally, used to carry out massive ethnic cleansing inside NATO.

Cohen praised Turkey for its contributions to preventing terror and stopping ethnic cleansing by participating in the humanitarian bombing of Yugoslavia.

So, when you look at the historical record, it's extremely hard to find any examples of use of military force undertaken for genuine humanitarian aims. States are not moral agents. They do not engage in the use of force for humanitarian ends, although that's always claimed. There are interventions that have had humanitarian consequences. That's a different story. So getting rid of Hitler was a humanitarian consequence, although incidentally it wasn't an intervention. The U.S. got into the war when it was attacked. Germany declared war on the U.S., not the other way around. In the post-World War II period there were a few cases, two that I know of, that are genuine, the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, which got rid of Pol Pot, and the Indian invasion of what is now Bangladesh, which stopped a huge atrocity. They were not undertaken with humanitarian intent, so they're not humanitarian interventions, but they did have humanitarian consequences. For those who are interested in our principles and values and humanitarian intervention, it's worth looking at the reaction.

In both cases, and these are the only genuine cases that I know of in the postwar period, the U.S. reaction was total fury. Vietnam had to be punished severely for getting rid of Pol Pot, and it was. The U.S. imposed extremely harsh sanctions. The U.S. supported a Chinese invasion to teach them a lesson. The U.S. turned to open support of Pol Pot, diplomatic support, insisted that the Khmer Rouge-based coalition have Cambodia's seat at the UN and direct military support. They called it support for the non-Khmer Rouge elements of the coalition, but everybody knew that the Khmer Rouge were the fighting elements.

In the case of India the U.S. practically went to war. The Seventh Fleet was mobilized. India had to be punished. Again there was a China connection. Kissinger at that time was planning a secret trip to China that was going to open up Chinese-American relations and he was going to go through Pakistan. That was apparently the main reason for the hysteria about the India action. It might spoil some surprising and exciting photo-ops in Peking. So a couple million more Bangladeshis have to be murdered. That's what it amounts to.

Let's talk about what individuals can do in overcoming orthodoxies. Steve Biko, the South African activist who was murdered by the apartheid regime while he was in custody, once said, "The most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."

He's quite accurate. Most oppression succeeds because its legitimacy is internalized. That's true of the most extreme cases. Take, say, slavery. It wasn't easy to revolt if you were a slave, by any means. But if you look over the history of slavery, it was in some sense recognized as just the way things are. We'll do the best we can under this regime. Another example, also contemporary (it's estimated that there are some 26 million slaves in the world), is women's rights. There the oppression is extensively internalized and accepted as legitimate and proper. It's still true today, but it's been true throughout history. Take working people. At one time in the U.S., in the mid-19th century, working for wage labor was considered not very different from chattel slavery. That was the slogan of the Republican Party, the banner under which northern workers went to fight in the Civil War. We're against chattel slavery and wage slavery. Free people do not rent themselves to others. Maybe you're forced to do it temporarily, but that's only on the way to becoming a free person, a free man, to put it in the rhetoric of the day. You become a free man when you're not compelled to take orders from others. That's an Enlightenment ideal. Incidentally, this was not coming from European radicalism. There were workers in Lowell, Massachusetts, a couple of miles from where we are. You could even read editorials in the *New York Times* saying this around that time. It took a long time to drive into people's heads the idea that it is legitimate to rent yourself. Now that's unfortunately pretty much accepted. So that's internalizing oppression. Anyone who thinks it's legitimate to be a wage laborer is internalizing oppression in a way which would have seemed intolerable to people in the mills 150 years ago.

Take the Seattle and Washington anti-WTO demonstrations, which were good ones, about canceling the debt. Yes, they should cancel the debt. But it's also worth recognizing that—a lot of people know this—the form of the protests and the objections on the part of the poor countries are internalizing a form of oppression. They are saying that the debt exists. You can't cancel it unless it exists. Does it exist? Well, it doesn't exist as an economic fact. It exists as an ideological construction. That's internalizing oppression. To liberate yourselves from those preconceptions and perspectives is to take a long step towards overcoming oppression.

Let's talk about the situation in South Asia. When Clinton was there in March 2000, he called it "the most dangerous place in the world."

The nuclear testing in India and Pakistan significantly increases the threat of a nuclear war. There's a big conflict over Kashmir that has been going on for a long time, and India and Pakistan have had several wars in which both of them were armed by the West, primarily the U.S. And there could be another one. For Clinton to have said that took a slight touch of hypocrisy. Part of the reason why India developed nuclear weapons is as a deterrent against the U.S. John Mearsheimer, a very mainstream political scientist at the University of Chicago, had an op-ed in the *New York Times* last spring in which he mentions that part of the reason India felt impelled to develop nuclear weapons was a result of the U.S. war in the Gulf and in the Balkans.

You mean, India tested again in the late 1990s.

They had developed nuclear weapons, but carrying out the tests, which is a big step, was apparently in part because like many other countries, they feel that they need a deterrent against the U.S., a rogue state that is unconstrained. That was a very broad reaction to the Balkans war. Even in client states like Israel, leading military analysts pointed out that the U.S. is becoming a danger to the world and other countries are going to have to develop weapons of mass destruction to defend themselves. They pointed out that if Serbia had had nuclear or chemical and biological weapons, the West wouldn't have been so quick to bomb them.

Clinton criticized India for violating the Nonproliferation Treaty. But the U.S. violates it. The Nonproliferation Treaty calls for good-faith efforts to reduce nuclear weapons on the part of the nuclear states. The U.S. and other nuclear powers succeeded in keeping out of the treaty a call for eliminating nuclear weapons. They didn't want to do that. It's only other people who shouldn't have them.

The National Missile Defense system that was being advocated by the Clinton administration, Star Wars-Lite, is recognized throughout the world, and by most military analysts here, to be a step towards increasing the threat of nuclear war. A national missile defense system is in effect a first-strike weapon. It means that you can protect yourself against a retaliatory strike by a country with limited nuclear power, not against Russia, but against China. Or India. It neutralizes the deterrent and therefore compels China or India to move to higher levels of destructive capacity. Furthermore, even if China alone reacts, as it presumably would, that would lead to Indian moves to deter China, and Pakistani moves in response, and Israeli moves. And on and on. It's no big secret.

Pakistan is routinely described as bankrupt and corrupt. In October 1999 there was a military coup that brought General Pervez Musharraf to power, overthrowing Nawaz Sharif. Pakistan was very useful to the U.S. during the Cold War in the Middle East, as well as South Asia.

That's true, and in fact the Taliban were trained in Pakistani religious schools and turned into real maniacs. With Pakistani army support they've taken over Afghanistan and turned it into a horror chamber and are now aiming to do the same in Pakistan, and may. It's not clear. It was not just Afghanistan. Pakistan was part of the system by which the U.S. controlled the Middle East. The Saudi Royal Guard protecting the Saudi royal family from its own population, not from anybody else, was Pakistani for a long time. Pakistan was part of the system of peripheral states, like Israel

and Turkey, Iran under the Shah, that were used to protect the monarchies in the oil-producing regions against threats from their own populations. Pakistan was part of that. Now it's not so pliable, and the U.S. is unhappy with the way it's going. It's sort of out of control.

India is the locus of tremendous resistance to globalization. There's Narmada Bachao Andolan, the Movement to Save the Narmada, to stop some of these IMF/World Bank big dam projects. There are some very prominent activists involved, like Vandana Shiva, Arundhati Roy, Mehta Patkar, and others. Why is there this level of resistance in India? Does it have anything to do with the legacy of Gandhi?

First of all, India has a very rich and complex history. If you go back to the 18th century, India was the commercial and industrial center of the world. In the early 19th century, book publication in Bengal was probably higher per capita than in England. It's not coming out of nowhere. But India was severely harmed by the British occupation. It was de-industrialized and turned into an impoverished rural society, but maintained a rich cultural tradition and a rich tradition of resistance. The Gandhian legacy is there, but remember, there was a revolution that threw out the British. This included the Congress Party. There was a national movement and it's remained a vibrant, complex society. After the British were thrown out, economic development resumed. Also, in a very mixed fashion. India developed heavy industry, advanced technology. On the other hand, the poverty is perhaps beyond anywhere in the world. Take a look at the quality of life measures published by the UN development report. South Asia is among the worst by most measures. There's some very interesting work on this by Amartya Sen, who won the Nobel Prize in economics. Part of the major work that he did for which he got the prize was comparisons of India and China.

One comparison is quite famous. It's been all over the *New York Times* and elsewhere. A book came out called *The Black Book of Communism*, which tells about the huge crimes of communism. We have to have the courage at last to face these crimes, previously ignored, as the new millennium opens; that's the general drift, with only slight exaggeration. *The Black Book* gives the shocking figure of 100 million deaths attributable to communism. Let's say it's right. Let's not argue about the numbers. That shows how utterly awful they were.

The biggest component, and the one that's prominently discussed in the first issue of the *New York Times Review of Books* for the millennium, of this alleged 100 million is the Chinese famine around 1958-1960. Maybe 30 million died. Sen points out that, although India used to have plenty of famines under the British, since independence it hasn't had famines like that. So there was never a famine in India since, say, the early 1950s, in which huge numbers of people died, as they did in China. He says this is related to specific forms of socio-economic and political and ideological development. India is more or less democratic. It has a free press. Information comes back from the bottom to the top, and if there are signs of a famine, the central authorities will know about it and there will be protest about it. In China, a totalitarian state, no information gets back to the center and any protest will be smashed, so they probably never knew about it until after it was over. Crimes of communism, traceable to the nature of the system.

That's half of what he says. The other half of his inquiry, which somehow escapes notice, has to do with another difference. He says China in the late 1940s began to institute rural public health and educational programs, as well as other programs oriented towards the mass of the population. India played the game by our rules. It didn't do any of this and there are consequences, for example, in mortality rates. These started to decline sharply in China from around 1950 until 1979. Then they stopped declining and started going up slightly. That was the period of the reforms. During the totalitarian period, from 1950 to about 1979, mortality rates declined. They declined in India, too, but much more slowly than in China up to 1979. Sen then says, suppose you measure the number of extra deaths in India resulting annually from not carrying out these Maoist-style programs or others for the benefit of the population, what you would call reforms if the term wasn't so ideological. He estimates close to four million extra deaths every year in India, which means that, as he puts it, every eight years in India the number of skeletons in the closet is the same as in

China's moment of shame, the famine. If you look at the whole period, it's about 100 million extra deaths in India alone after the democratic capitalist period enters.

Suppose you were to undertake the same calculations that are used quite correctly to count up the crimes of communism? It turns out that in the leading democratic capitalist country of the South, in fact of the world, if you count population, that country alone up until about 1980 has produced about 100 million dead, the same number that's attributed to all the communist countries of the 20th century in the world. That's of course only the beginning. Suppose we carry out the same calculation on the same grounds elsewhere in the domains that are dominated by Western power. You're going to get astronomical figures. But this is not an acceptable topic. There can be no Black Book detailing such facts, just as there can be no realistic comparison of the utterly hideous Soviet record with the record of comparable countries that remained under Western domination, for example, Brazil, taken over as a "testing area for scientific methods of development based solidly on capitalism," according to celebratory and respected scholarship, with consequences for the vast majority of the population that are hardly much to celebrate.

Talk about U.S. policy in Colombia. The Inter-hemispheric Resource Center in Albuquerque wrote a paper entitled "U.S. Policy in Colombia: Towards a Vietnam Quagmire." Do you think that's an appropriate analogy? The New York Times in an editorial was very critical of Clinton's proposal for a \$1 billion plus package, calling it "dangerous plans for Colombia" that "risks dragging the U.S. into a costly counterinsurgency war."

Because of the perspective of the *New York Times* editors, they don't like the phrase "Vietnam quagmire." I don't like it for Vietnam either. Were the Russians caught in a quagmire in Afghanistan? They shouldn't have invaded. The problem with the Afghan war is not that the Russians got caught in a quagmire. It's that they shouldn't have invaded the country. The same is true of the U.S. and Vietnam. The fact that it became costly to the U.S., which is what a quagmire means, is irrelevant. They invaded the country and destroyed it, invaded South Vietnam, in fact, destroyed it and destroyed much of the rest. So I think we ought to keep away from the phrase. Accepting the phrase is already buying a massive propaganda system, which we shouldn't do.

Interestingly, the Interhemispheric Resource Center is an alternative organization.

They do wonderful work. But that phrase I don't like. The problem in Colombia is not whether the U.S. will get dragged into a war. That's a minor issue. The major issue is what it's all about. This past spring, the farmers in Bolivia were staging a protest. The U.S. had come in with crop destruction programs and counterinsurgency operations that had destroyed their coca crops, and now they're starving. Bolivia is one of the poorest countries of the world. So first they are driven to coca production by the "Washington consensus" and IMF/World Bank programs which say, You've got to open your country up to agriculture and other imports and you have to be a rational peasant producing for the agro-export market trying to maximize profit. You put those conditions together and it spells c-o-c-a. A rational peasant producing for the agro-export market when the country is being flooded by subsidized Western agricultural production is going to be producing coca. Then the West comes in and violently wipes it out, and they end up with peasants protesting in the streets. That's Bolivia.

The *Boston Globe* had a good article on Colombia by a reporter in one of the areas that's targeted for the new program where the U.S. is planning to come in to destroy the crops. That's actually a cover for eliminating the guerrillas. These are areas that are under guerrilla control and have been for a long time.

This is the FARC, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas.

It's the FARC mostly. There's another guerilla organization, the ELN, Ejército de Liberación Nacional, but it's mainly the FARC. So the military program happens to be concentrated in the areas of guerrilla control and not the areas of military and paramilitary control, although it's well

known that they're deep into narco-trafficking in pretty much the same way the guerrillas are. In fact, the involvement of the guerrillas in coca production is just that they tax everything. So they tax coca production, too, there may be some other involvement that nobody knows about, but that's basically it. What's the *Globe* article on Colombia about? These peasants are terrified because there are rumors going around that the U.S.-Colombian program is going to start fumigating. If they fumigate it's going to be like Bolivia. That will destroy their crops. In fact, they'll destroy not only the coca crops but maybe all their other crops. The chemical and biological warfare that the U.S. carries out, and that's what it is, may say it's going after coca, but it has unknown consequences for the rest of the ecology.

Here we're getting to the issues, not the quagmire. Whether the U.S. manages to keep troops out of it and let the Colombian army do the dirty work or not is not the issue. The policies are not nicer if the Colombian military and its paramilitary associates carry out the policies under U.S. direction, funding, and pressure. Farming out atrocities to paramilitaries is standard operating procedure. Serbia in Kosovo and Indonesia in East Timor are two recent examples. Israel in southern Lebanon is another.

Almost paralleling Central America, would you say?

In many ways. There are different mixtures in different countries. So the U.S. war against Nicaragua had to use U.S.-run paramilitaries, the contras, because the usual repressive force, the army, wasn't available, and the U.S. public wouldn't tolerate direct invasion, like the Kennedy-Johnson attack against South Vietnam. But in El Salvador, they just used the army.

Colombia was once a big wheat producer. That was terminated in the 1950s by Food for Peace aid. Food for Peace sounds nice, but if you look at its consequences, it's something else. Food for Peace is a gift from the U.S. taxpayer to U.S. agribusiness. It's not a gift from agribusiness. So U.S. taxpayers are paying agribusiness to send essentially free food to other countries. What happens when you pour U.S. wheat into Colombia, essentially free? It wiped out wheat production. It's no longer a major wheat producer. It was a coffee producer, still is. Coffee is one of the major commodities in international exchange, second to oil. Coffee, like most commodities, fluctuates pretty radically in price. They'll be high one year and low the next. If you're a big agribusiness corporation, that doesn't bother you. You take a loss here, make a gain there. Suppose you're a peasant with a couple of acres of coca plant. You can't tell your children, Don't bother eating this year. Maybe we'll have some food next year. If commodities fluctuate in price, small producers are essentially wiped out. That's understood in Western society.

After socio-economic programs are imposed with plenty of force behind them to create a situation where peasants are driven to producing coca for the American market, then we come in with \$1.7 billion for a military attack and chemical and biological warfare, which is what we ought to be calling it. That's what it means to use massive pesticides and fungicides and new experimental techniques. That's the background, and that's what ought to be discussed, not a Vietnam quagmire, not whether it will be too costly to us.

There's another question that ought to be raised: What right do we have to do anything in Colombia? There happens to be a lethal drug produced in the U.S., which is killing far more people than cocaine. Tobacco. We force that on other countries of the world. Countries in, say, East Asia not only have to accept our lethal drugs but they have to accept advertising for them, advertising aimed at vulnerable populations, like women and children. These issues came up at the same time that Bush was announcing the latest phase of the drug war with great fanfare. With virtually no media coverage in this case, the U.S. Trade Representative was conducting hearings on the refusal of Thailand to accept advertising for U.S. lethal drugs. They were threatened with trade sanctions, which are murderous for them, if they don't accept U.S.-produced drugs, which means advertising too—in reality, whatever the words may be. In effect, it's as if the Colombian cartel could insist that we import cocaine and allow them to post billboards in Times Square showing how cool it is for kids to use it. But suppose China, say, where millions of people are being killed by our lethal

drug, would say, okay, we're going to go into North Carolina and carry out counterinsurgency operations and chemical and biological warfare to destroy the drugs that you are forcing on us. You're even forcing advertising on us. Do they have a right to do that? If they don't have a right to do that, how do we have a right to do anything in Colombia?

In one of your talks on the U.S. mideast policy in the post-Madrid 1991 period you concluded with the following, "These are not laws of nature. They can be changed. The most important changes will have to take place right here. Unless they take place within the U.S., it's not going to matter much what happens elsewhere." That's what I want to ask you about. It seems that you're taking agency and autonomy away from groups and movements outside the U.S. Is that your intention?

It's not my intention. There's an interplay between what happens elsewhere and what happens here. But say, Arundhati Roy's protest against the dam in India is likely to have only limited effect unless it sparks protests here, because here is where the policies of the World Bank and the international agencies are going to be determined. It's not that what goes on in India is irrelevant. Of course it's not irrelevant. Even a totalitarian state is affected by what people do. But the primary agency is going to be here, just because of the reasons of distribution of power. Things get stimulated here by what happens abroad. Take, say, genetically modified organisms. The protest has been very strong abroad, in India, Europe. It began to have a big effect when it flew over the Atlantic. It came over the Atlantic as a result of protests elsewhere, which have something like the feared "virus effect" of independent development.

It wasn't that it had been absent here, but it was significantly stimulated by protests elsewhere. Then it happens here, and pretty soon you had Monsanto backing off publicly. We should not disregard the facts about the way power is distributed. That means the primary responsibility is here on most issues, not on everything, but on most issues, just because this is the richest and by far the most powerful country in the world.