



In Rare Joint Interview, Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn on Iraq, Vietnam, Activism and History

Monday, April 16th, 2007

<http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/04/16/1338223>

In a Democracy Now! special from Boston, two of the city's leading dissidents, Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, sit down for a rare joint interview. Noam Chomsky began teaching linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge over 50 years ago. He is the author of dozens of books on linguistics and U.S. foreign policy. Howard Zinn is one of the country's most widely-read historians. His classic work "A People's History of the United States" has sold over 1.5 million copies and it has altered how many teach the nation's history. Chomsky and Zinn discuss Vietnam, activism, history, Israel-Palestine, and Iraq, which Chomsky calls "one of the worst catastrophes in military and political history."

We are broadcasting today from Boston. It is Patriots Day here in Massachusetts – a state holiday to mark the start of the Revolutionary War. In a Democracy Now! special we are joined today by two of the city's leading dissidents, Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn. Noam Chomsky began teaching linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge over 50 years ago. He is the author of dozens of books on linguistics and U.S. foreign policy. His most recent book is titled "Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy."

Howard Zinn is one of the country's most widely-read historians. He taught political science at Boston University from 1964 to 1988. His classic work "A People's History of the United States" has sold over 1.5 million copies and it has altered how many teach the nation's history. Howard Zinn's latest book is "A Power Governments Cannot Suppress." Today an hour with Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky in a rare joint interview.

- **Noam Chomsky.** Professor Emeritus of linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is the author of dozens of books on linguistics and U.S. foreign policy. His latest book is "Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy."
- **Howard Zinn.** Professor emeritus at Boston University. His classic work "A People's History of the United States" has sold over 1.5 million copies. His latest book is "A Power Governments Cannot Suppress."

AMY GOODMAN: Today an hour with Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky in a rare interview with them together, and I welcome you both to *Democracy Now!*

NOAM CHOMSKY: Nice to be here.

HOWARD ZINN: Thanks Amy.

AMY GOODMAN: What a day to be here. This is a day of the Boston Marathon, it is raining. It is a major storm outside and tens of thousands of people -- were either of you planning to run today?

HOWARD ZINN: Well we were, yes, but you know --

NOAM CHOMSKY: but you really made it impossible for us.

AMY GOODMAN: I'm sorry about that.

HOWARD ZINN: We had a choice of running in the marathon or having an interview with you, what's more important?

AMY GOODMAN: Well, today is Patriot's Day, Howard Zinn, what does patriotism mean to you?

HOWARD ZINN: I'm glad you said what it means to me. Because it means to me something different than it means to a lot of people I think who have distorted the idea of patriotism. Patriotism to me means doing what you think your country should be doing. Patriotism means supporting your government when you think it's doing right, opposing your government when you think it's doing wrong. Patriotism to me means really what the *Declaration of Independence* suggests. And that is that government is an artificial entity.

Government is set up--and here's what a *Declaration of Independence* is about, government is set up by the people in order to fulfill certain responsibilities: equality, life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. And according to the *Declaration of Independence* when the government violates those responsibilities, then, and these are the words of the *Declaration of Independence* it is the right of the people to alter or abolish the government.

In other's words the government is not holy, the government is not to be obeyed when the government is wrong. So to me patriotism in it's best sense means thinking about the people in the country, the principals for which the country stands for, and it requires opposing the government when the government violates those principles.

So today, for instance, the highest act of patriotism I suggest, would be opposing the war in Iraq and calling for a withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Simply because everything about the war violates the fundamental principles of equality, life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, not just for Americans, but for people in another part of the world. So, yes, patriotism today requires citizens to be active on many, many different fronts to oppose government policies on the war, government policies which have taken trillions of dollars from this country's treasury and used it for war and militarism. That's what patriotism would require today.

AMY GOODMAN: Noam Chomsky, the headlines today, just this weekend, one of the bloodiest months in Iraq, the number of prisoners in U.S. Jails in Iraq has reached something like 18,000. Who knows if that's not an underestimate? An *Associated Press* photographer remains in jail imprisoned by U.S. authorities without charge for more than a year. The health ministry has found 70% of Baghdad school children showing symptoms of trauma-related stress. Your assessment now of the situation there?

NOAM CHOMSKY: This is one of the worst catastrophes in military history and also in political history. The most recent studies of the *Red Cross* show that Iraq has suffered the worst decline in child mortality, infant mortality, an increase in infant mortality known. But it's since 1990. That is, it's a combination of the affect of the murderers' and brutal sanctions regime, which we don't talk much about, which devastated society through the 1990's and strengthened Saddam Hussein, compelled the population to rely on him for survival, which probably saved him from the fate of a whole long series of other tyrants who were overthrown by their own people supported by the U.S.

And then came the war on top of it which has simply increased the horrors. The decline is unprecedented. The increase in infant mortality is unprecedented; it's now below the level of, worse than some of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa. It's one index of what's happened. The most probably measure of deaths in a study sponsored by M.I.T. incidentally carried out by leading specialists in Iraq and here last October was about 650,000 killed, soon to be pushing a million. There are several million people fled including the large part of the professional classes, people who could in principal help rebuild the country. And without going on, it's a hideous catastrophe and getting worse.

It's also worth stressing that aggressors do not have any rights. This is a clear-cut case of aggression and violation of the U.N. Charter, a supreme international crime and in the words of the Nuremberg Tribunal, aggressors simply have no rights to make any decisions. They have responsibilities. The responsibilities are, first of all to pay enormous reparations and that includes for the sanctions-- the effect of the sanctions, in fact it ought to include the support for Saddam Hussein in the 1980's, which was torture for Iraqis and worse for Iranians.

The paid reparations hold those responsible, accountable and attend to the will of the victims. It doesn't necessarily mean follow blindly, but certainly attend to it. And the will of the victims is known, the regular U.S.-run polls in Iraq, and the government polling institutions, it's just an overwhelming support for either immediate or quick withdrawal of U.S. Troops, about 80 percent think that the presence of U.S. Troops increases the level of violence. Over 60% think that troops are legitimate targets. This isn't for all of Iraq, if you take the figures of Arab Iraq where the troops are actually deployed the figures are higher. The figures keep going up. They're unmentioned, virtually unreported, scarcely alluded to in the Baker-Hamilton critical report. That'll be our primary concern, along with the concerns of the Americans.

AMY GOODMAN: Vice president Cheney is saying this war can be won.

NOAM CHOMSKY: There's an interesting study being done right now by a former Russian soldier in Afghanistan in the late 1980's, he's now a student in Toronto who's comparing the Russian press and the Russian political figures and military leaders, what they were saying about Afghanistan, comparing it with what Cheney, others and the press are saying about Iraq and not to your great surprise, change a few names and it comes out about the same.

They were also saying the war in Afghanistan could be won and they were right. If they had increased the level of violence sufficiently, they could have won the war in Ira—in Afghanistan. They're also pointing out -- of course they describe correctly the heroism of the Russian troops, the efforts to bring assistance to the poor people of Afghanistan, to protect them from U.S.-run Islamic fundamentalist terrorist forces, the dedication, the rights they have won for the people in Afghanistan, and the warning that if they pull out it

will be total disaster, mayhem, they must stay and win.

Unfortunately they were right about that too, when they did pull out, it was a total disaster. The U.S.-backed forces tore the place to shreds, so terrible that the people even welcomed the Taliban when they came in. So yes, those arguments can always be given. The Germans could have argued if they had the force that they didn't, that they could have won the Second World War. I mean the question is not can you win. The question is should you be there.

AMY GOODMAN: You say and talk about Afghanistan, sure the Russians could have won if they had-- could have tolerated the level of violence. What are you saying about Iraq? Do you feel the same way?

NOAM CHOMSKY: It depends on what you mean by win. The United States certainly has the capacity to wipe the country out. If that's winning, yeah, you can win. It's -- in terms of the goals that the United States attempted to achieve, the U.S. Government, not the -- the United States, to install a client regime, which would be obedient to the United States, which would permit military bases, which would allow U.S. and British corporations to control the energy resources and so on, in terms of achieving that goal, I don't know if they can achieve that. But that they could destroy the country, that's beyond question.

AMY GOODMAN: We're talking to Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, on this Patriot's Day that is celebrated in Massachusetts. We're in Boston, Massachusetts and we'll be back with them in a min.

AMY GOODMAN: As we continue today, talking about the state of the world with two of the leading dissidents here in this country, Howard Zinn, legendary historian, author of many books, *The People's History of the United States* as well as, his latest is *A Power Governments Cannot Suppress*. We're also joined by Noam Chomsky, linguist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, his latest book is *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy*. Howard, you went to North Vietnam, can you talk about how the Vietnam War ended, and also your experience there, why you went?

HOWARD ZINN: Well, I went to North Vietnam in early 1968 with Father Daniel Berrigan and the two of us went actually at the request of the North Vietnamese government who were going to release the first three airmen prisoners, American fliers who were in prison in North Vietnam and the North Vietnamese wanted to release them on the Tet holiday, also the Tet Offensive, sort of as a gesture, I suppose as a good will gesture and they asked for representatives of the American peace movement so Daniel Berrigan and I went to Hanoi for that reason.

And of course it was an educational experience for us. Noam was talking about in response to your question about victory and winning. And the question is, of course, why should we win if winning means destroying a country? And there's still people who say, oh, we could have won the Vietnam war, as if the question was, you know, can we win or can we lose, instead of what are we doing to these people.

And, yes, Noam said, yes, we could win in Iraq by destroying all of Iraq. The Russians could have won Afghanistan by destroying all of Afghanistan. We could have won in Vietnam by dropping nuclear bombs instead of killing two million people in Vietnam, killing 10 million people in Vietnam. And that would be considered victory, who would take satisfaction in that?

What we saw in Vietnam is, I think what people are seeing in Iraq. And that is huge numbers of people dying for no reason at all. What we saw in Vietnam was the American army being sent halfway around the world to a country, which was not threatening us and we were destroying the people in the country. And here in Iraq, we're going the other way, we're also going halfway around the world to do the same thing to them. And our experience in Iraq contradicted as I think the experiences of people who are on the ground in Iraq contradicted again and again the statements of American officials.

The statements of the high military, statements like, oh, we're only bombing military targets, oh, these are accidents when so many civilians are killed. And, yes, as Cheney said, victory is around the corner. What we saw in Vietnam was horrifying. And it was obviously horrifying even to G.I.'s in Vietnam because they began to come back from Vietnam and oppose the war and formed Vietnam Veterans against the war.

We saw villages as far away from any military target as you can imagine, absolutely destroyed. And children killed and their graves still fresh by American jet planes coming over in the middle of the night. When I hear them talk about John McCain as a hero, I say to myself, oh, yeah, he was a prisoner and prisoners are maltreated and everywhere and this is terrible. But John McCain, like the other American fliers, what were they doing? They were bombing defenseless people. And so, yes Vietnam is something that by the way, is still not taught very well in American schools. I spoke to a group of people in an advanced history class not long ago, 100 kids, asked them how many people here have heard of the *My Lai Massacre*? No hand was raised. We are not teaching -- if we were teaching the history of Vietnam as it should be taught, then the American people from the start would have opposed the war instead of waiting three or four years for a majority of the American people to declare their opposition to the war.

AMY GOODMAN: Noam Chomsky, you went to Cambodia after the bombing.

NOAM CHOMSKY: I went to Laos and North Vietnam.

AMY GOODMAN: When and why?

NOAM CHOMSKY: Two years after Howard, early 1970. I spent the week in Laos. A very moving week, happened to be in Laos right after the C.I.A. mercenary army had cleared out about 30,000 people from the Plain of Jarres area in Northern Laos, where they had been subjected to what was then the most fierce bombing in human history, it was exceeded shortly after by Cambodia. These are poor peasant society, probably most of them didn't even know they were in Laos. There was nothing there. The planes were sent there because the bombing of North Vietnam had been temporarily stopped and there was nothing for the air force to do so they bombed Laos. They had been living in caves for over two years trying to farm at night. They had finally been driven out by the mercenary army to the surroundings of Vientien.

And I spent a lot of time interviewing refugees with Fred Branfman who did heroic work in bringing this story finally to the American people. And so more interesting things in Laos. Then I went to North Vietnam also where Howard had been, invited by the government, but I was actually invited to teach. It was a bombing pause, a short bombing pause and they were able to bring people in from outlying areas back to Hanoi and the Polytechnic University of what was left of it, the ruins of the Polytechnic University and I came and lectured on just about anything that I knew anything about-- these are people who had been out of touch with the faculty, students, others who had been out of touch with the world for five years and they asked me everything from what's Norman Mailer writing these days, to technical questions and linguistics and mathematics whatever else I could say anything about.

I also traveled around a little bit, not very much, but for a few days, but enough to see what Howard described, right close to Hanoi, I never got very far away, which was the most protected area because in Hanoi there were embassies and journalists so the bombing of the city was nothing like what it was much further away. But even there you could see the ruins of villages, the shell of the major hospital in Thanh Hoa, which had been bombed by accident of course. Areas that we're -- just moonscapes, where there had been villages in an effort to destroy a bridge and so on. So that those were my two weeks in Laos and North Vietnam.

AMY GOODMAN: You were a linguistics professor at M.I.T., at the time?

NOAM CHOMSKY: Yes.

AMY GOODMAN: So, why did you go? What drove you to? And, what was the response here at home?

NOAM CHOMSKY: Well, I was able to—and actually I had intended to go only for one week to North Vietnam. But the -- if you really want to know the details, the U.N. bureaucrat in Laos who was organizing flights was a very board Indian bureaucrat who had nothing to do and apparently his only joy in the world was making things difficult for people who wanted to do something, not untypical. And fortunately for me, he made it difficult for me and my companions, Doug Dowd and Dick Fernandez to go to North Vietnam. So I had a week in Laos, which was an extremely valuable week. I wrote about it in some detail. But, I was teaching at the time, I was to be away, it was a vacation week, so actually I taught linguistics at the Polytechnic University.

AMY GOODMAN: What about the opposition here at home and your level of protest at MIT? What did you do?

NOAM CHOMSKY: Well, M.I.T was a curious situation. I happened to be working in the laboratory, which was 100%, supported by the three armed services, but it was also one of the centers of the anti-war resistance. Starting in 1965 along with an artist friend in Boston, Harold Tovish, we organized, tried to organize national tax resistance, this was 1965. Like Howard, I was giving talks, taking part in demonstrations, getting arrested.

By 1966 we were becoming involved directly in support for a draft resistance, helping deserters and others that just continued – it's worth remembering, one often hears today justified complaints about how little protest there is against the war in Iraq. But that's very misleading. And here is as Howard was saying a little sense of history is useful.

The protest against the war in Iraq is far beyond the protest against Vietnam on any comparable level. Large-scale protest against the war in Vietnam did not begin until there were several hundred thousand U.S. troops in South Vietnam, the country had been virtually destroyed, the bombing had been extended to the north, to Laos, soon to Cambodia, where incidentally we have just learned, – or rather we haven't learned, but we could learn if we had a free press, that the bombing in Cambodia, which is known to be horrendous, was actually five times as high as was reported, greater than the entire allied bombing in all of World War II on a defenseless peasant society, which turned peasants into enraged fanatics. During those years the Khmer Rouge grew from nothing, a few thousand scattered people to hundreds of thousands and that led to the part of the Cambodia that we're allowed to think about.

But the real protest against the war in Vietnam came at a period far beyond what has yet been reached in Iraq. First few years of the war, there was almost nothing. So little protest that virtually nobody in the United States even knows when the war began. Kennedy invaded South Vietnam in 1962. That was after seven years of efforts to impose a Latin-American style terror state, which had killed tens of thousands of people and elicited resistance.

In 1962, Kennedy sent the U.S. Air force to start bombing South Vietnam, under South Vietnamese markings, but nobody was deluded by that, initiated chemical warfare to destroy crops and ground cover, and started programs which rounded openly millions of people into what amounted to concentration camps, called strategic hamlets where they were surrounded by barbed wire to protect them as it was said from the guerrillas, who everyone knew they were voluntarily supporting, an indigenous South Vietnamese resistance. That was 1962.

You couldn't get two people in a living room to talk about it. In October 1965, right here in Boston, maybe the most liberal city in the country, there were then already a couple hundred thousand troops, bombing North Vietnam had started. We tried to have our first major public demonstration against the war on the Boston Common, the usual place for meetings. I was supposed to be one of the speakers, but nobody could hear a word. The meeting was totally broken up by students marching over from universities, by others, and hundreds of state police, which kept people from being murdered. The next day's newspaper, the *Boston Globe*, the world newspaper was full of denunciations of the people who dared make mild statements about bombing the North.

In fact right through the protests, which did reach a substantial scale and were really significant, especially the resistance, it was mostly directed against the war in North Vietnam. The attack on South Vietnam was mostly ignored. Incidentally the same is true of government planning. We know about that from the Pentagon Papers and the subsequent documents, there was meticulous planning about the bombing of the North. Where should you bomb? And how far should you go? And so on. Bombing of the South in the internal documents there's almost nothing. There's a simple reason for it. The bombing of the south was costless. Nobody's going to shoot you down. Nobody's going to complain. Do whatever you want. Wipe the place out. Which is pretty much what happened.

North Vietnam was dangerous. You could hit Russian ships in harbor. As I said there were embassies in Hanoi where people could report that you were bombing an internal Chinese railroad that happened to pass through North Vietnam. So there could be international repercussions and costs, so therefore it was very carefully calibrated. If you look at say Robert McNamara's memoirs, lot of discussion of the bombing of North Vietnam, virtually nothing about the bombing of the South Vietnam. Which even in 1965, was triple the scale of the bombing of the North, and it had been going on for years. Now there is a great deal more protest.

There actually one interesting illustration, I'll end with that, Arthur Schlesinger, best known American historian, in the case of Vietnam, the early years he supported it. In fact if you read his *Thousand Days*, story of the Kennedy administration, it's barely mentioned except for the wonderful things that's happening. By 1966, as there was beginning to be concern about the costs of the war, we were reaching situations rather like a lead opinion today about Iraq: it's too costly, we might not be able to win, and so on. Schlesinger wrote, I'm almost quoting, that we all pray that the hawks will be right in believing that more troops will allow us to win. And if they are right, we'll be praising the wisdom and statesmanship of the American government in winning a war in Vietnam after turning the land -- turning it into a land of ruin and wreck. So we'll be praising their wisdom and statesmanship, but it probably won't work. You can translate that into today's commentaries, which are called the doves.

On the other hand, greatly to his credit, when the bombing of Iraq started, Schlesinger took the strongest position of anyone I've seen, of condemnation of it. First stated so strong that it wasn't, almost never-- didn't appear in the press and I haven't heard a word about it since. As the line began he said this is a date, which will live in infamy. And he re-called President Roosevelt's words at Pearl Harbor, a date that will live in infamy because the United States is following the path of the Japanese fascists, a pretty strong statement. I think that sort of reflects a difference you see in public attitudes too, opposition to aggression is far higher than it was in the 60's.

AMY GOODMAN: Howard Zinn, how did Vietnam end, the war end and what are the parallels that you see today? Do you see parallels today?

HOWARD ZINN: Well, I suppose if you believe that Henry Kissinger deserved the Nobel Prize, you would think that the war ended because Henry Kissinger went to Paris and negotiated with the Vietnamese. But the war ended, I think, because finally after that slow buildup of protests, I think the war

ended because the protests in the United States reached a crescendo, which couldn't be ignored. And because the GI's coming home were turning against the war and because soldiers in the field were -- well, they were throwing grenades under the officer's tents, the "Fragging Phenomenon." There's a book called *Soldiers in Revolt* by a man named David Cortright and he details how much dissidence there was, how much opposition to the war there was among soldiers in Vietnam and how this was manifested in their behavior and desertions. A huge number of desertions and essentially the government of the United States found it impossible to continue the war. The ROTC chapters were closing down.

In some ways, it's similar to the situation now where the government in Iraq, the government is finding, our government is finding that we don't have enough soldiers to fight the war. So they're sending them back again and again. And where they're recruiting sergeants here in the United States, they're going to enormous lengths, lying to young people about what will await them and what benefits they will get. The government is desperate to maintain the military force today in Iraq. And I think in Vietnam, this dissidence among the military, and its inability to really carry on the war militarily was a crucial factor. Of course, along with the fact, we simply could not defeat the Vietnamese resistance. And resistance movements -- and this is what we are finding out in Iraq today -- resistance movements against a foreign aggressor, they will get very desperate, they will not give in. And the resistance movement in Vietnam would not surrender.

And so, the US government found it obviously impossible to win without, yes, dropping nuclear bombs, destroying the country and making it clear to the world that the United States was an outlaw nation and impossible to hold the support of the people at home. And so, yes, we finally did what a number of us had been asking for many, many years to withdraw from Vietnam and the same arguments were made at that time. That is, when we called in 1967, well, I wrote a book in 1967 called, *Vietnam, the Logic of Withdrawal* and the reaction to that was, you know, we can't withdraw. It will be terrible if we withdraw. There will be civil war if we withdraw. There will be a bloodbath if we withdraw. And so we didn't withdraw and the war went on for another six years, another eight years, six years for the Americans to withdraw, eight years totally. The war went on and on and another 20,000 Americans were killed. Another million Vietnamese were killed.

And when we finally withdrew, there was no bloodbath. I mean it wasn't that everything was fine when we withdrew and there were re-education camps set up, and the Chinese people were driven out of Hanoi on boats, so it wasn't -- . But the point is, that there was no bloodbath, the bloodbath was what we were doing in Vietnam. Just as today when they say, oh, there will be civil war, there will be chaos if we withdraw from Iraq. There is civil war, there is chaos and no one is pointing out what we have done to Iraq. Two million people driven from their homes and children in dire straits, no waters, no food. And so the remembrance of Vietnam is important if we are going to make it clear that we must withdraw from Iraq and find another way, not for the United States, for some international group, preferably a group composed mostly of representatives of Arab nations to come into Iraq and help mediate whatever strife there is among the various fractions in Iraq. But certainly the absolute necessary first step in Iraq now is what we should have done in Vietnam in 1967 and that is simply get out as fast as ships and planes can carry us out.

AMY GOODMAN: This is *Democracy Now!* democracynow.org, the war and peace report. I'm Amy Goodman. My guests here in Boston, as we broadcast from Massachusetts on this Patriot's Day, are Noam Chomsky. Noam Chomsky, a professor of linguistics of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Howard Zinn, a legendary historian, taught at Spellman for years until he was forced out because he took the side of the young women students and then went to Boston University and only recently, in the last few years, was given -- what -- given an honorary degree by Spellman?

HOWARD ZINN: Yes.

AMY GOODMAN: Did you feel vindicated?

HOWARD ZINN: I always feel vindicated.

AMY GOODMAN: Noam Chomsky, what did you think of Nancy Pelosi, House speaker, third in line in succession for the presidency after Dick Cheney, going to Syria together with the first Muslim congress member in the United States, Keith Ellison from Minneapolis?

NOAM CHOMSKY: The only thing wrong with it, it was that it was the third person in line. I mean, if the United States government were sincerely interested in bringing about some measure of peace, prosperity, stability in the region instead of dominating it by force, now they would of course be dealing with Syria and with Iran. Pretty much the way the Baker-Hamilton report proposed except beyond what they proposed because they proposed, they should be dealing with it in matters concerning with Iraq. But there are regional issues. In the case of Syria, there are issues related to Syria itself, but also to Lebanon and to Israel. Israel is in control of, in fact has annexed in violation of Security Council orders, has annexed a large part of Syrian territory, the Golan Heights. Syria is making it very clear that they are interested in a peace settlement with Israel, which would involve, as it should, the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from occupied territories.

AMY GOODMAN: Are there secret negotiations going on between Israel and Syria now?

NOAM CHOMSKY: You never know what's going on in secret. But so far Israel has been flatly refusing any negotiations. In fact, the only debate that's going on now is whether it's the United States that's pressuring Israel or Israel is pressuring the United States to prevent negotiations on the Golan Heights and in fact on the occupied territories all together. This is called a very contentious issue, Israel-Palestine, which is kind of surprising. It's a contentious issue only in the United States, and even not among the American population. It's a contentious issue because the US government and the Israeli government are blocking a very broad international consensus, which has almost universal support, even the majority of Americans and which has been on the table for about 30 years, blocked by the US and Israel. And everyone knows who's involved in this, what the general framework for a settlement is.

It was put on the --it was brought to the Security Council in 1976, by the Arab states, Jordan, Syria and Egypt, the so-called confrontation states and the other Arab states. They proposed a two-state settlement on the internationally recognized border, a settlement, which included the wording of UN-242, the first major resolution, recognition of the right of each state in the region to exist in peace and security within secure and recognized boundaries, that would include Israel and a Palestinian state. It was vetoed by the United States and a similar resolution vetoed in 1980.

I won't run through the whole history, but throughout this whole history, with temporary and rare exceptions, there is a couple here and here, the US has simply blocked the settlement and still does and Israel rejects it. Sometimes it's dramatic. In 1988, the Palestinian National Council, their governing body, formally accepted a two-state settlement. They tacitly accepted it before. There was a reaction from Israel immediately; it was a coalition government, Shimon Perez, Yitzhak Shamir. Their reaction was, quoting, that "there cannot be an additional Palestinian state between Jordan and Israel." An additional implying that Jordan already is a Palestinian state. So there can't be another one and the fate of the territories will be settled according to the guidelines of the state of Israel. Shortly after that, the Bush number one administration totally endorsed that proposal -- that was the Baker plan, James Baker plan of December 1989 -- fully endorsed that proposal, extreme rejectionism.

And so it continues with rare exceptions, just moving to today, the Arab league proposal has been reintroduced, it's 2002, but they brought it up again a couple of weeks ago. That goes even further. It

calls for full normalization of relations with Israel within the framework of the international consensus on a two-state settlement, which might involve to use official US terminology from far back, minor and mutual modifications, like straightening out the border, or in other words in the wrong place or something. And then there are technicalities to be resolved, plenty of them.

But that's the basic frame work, supported by the Arab world, by Europe, by the non-aligned countries, Latin America and others. It is supported by Iran, it doesn't get reported here. One loves Ahmadinejad's crazed statements, but do not report the statements of his superior, Ayatollah Khameni who's in charge of international affairs -- Ahmadinejad doesn't have anything to do with it -- who has declared a couple of times that Iran supports the Arab league position. Hezbollah in Lebanon has made it clear that they don't like it, they don't believe in recognizing Israel, but if the Palestinians accept it, they will not disrupt it, they are a Lebanese organization. And Hamas has said, they would accept the Arab league consensus. That leaves the United States and Israel in splendid isolation, even more so than in the past 30 years in rejecting a political settlement. So it's contentious in a sense, but not in that there's no way to resolve it. We know how to resolve it.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you think it will change?

NOAM CHOMSKY: It depends on people here. If the majority of the American population, who also accept this decide to do something about it, yeah, it will change.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you think it's changing, for example, with Carter's book coming out?

NOAM CHOMSKY: I think it's one of the signs of change and there are many others. Or is it just a change mood in the country, I mean, anybody who's been giving talks about this just knows it from personal experience. I mean not very long ago, if I was giving a talk on the Middle East, I mean, even at MIT, there would be armed police present, or at least undercover police to prevent violence, disruption, breakup of meetings and so on. That's a thing of the past. By now it's much easier to talk about this. Actually, Carter's book is quite interesting. Carter's book was essentially repeating what is known around the world.

AMY GOODMAN: *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid.*

NOAM CHOMSKY: Yeah. He -- there were a couple of errors in the book, they were ignored. The only serious error in the book, which a fact checker should have picked up, is that Carter accepted a kind of party line on the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Israel invaded Lebanon and killed maybe 15,000-20,000 people and destroyed much of southern Lebanon. They were able to do it because the Reagan administration vetoed Security Council resolutions and supported them and so on.

The claim here, you know, you read Thomas Freedman or someone, is that Israel invaded in response to shelling of the Galilee from -- by Palestinians, Palestinian terror attacks and Carter repeats that, it is not true. There was the border, there was a cease-fire, the Palestinians observed it despite regular Israeli attempts, something as heavy bombing and others to elicit some response that would be a pretext to the planned invasion. When there was no pretext, they invaded anyway. That's the only serious error in the book, ignored. There are some very valuable things in the book, also ignored. One of them, perhaps the most important is that Carter is the first, I think, in the main stream in the United States to report what was known in dissident circles and talked about, namely that the famous road map, which the quartet suggested as steps towards settlement of the problem, the road map was instantly rejected by Israel.

AMY GOODMAN: I'm going to interrupt you here because we're going to have to end the broadcast. We're going to bring you folks part two of this conversation in the next few days. But I want to end with

Howard, tonight you'll be in Faneuil Hall in Boston. Do you have hope right now as a man who has been part of dissident movements for many years, led them, chronicled them in these last few minutes of this first part of our discussion?

HOWARD ZINN: By the way, you're going to be with me in Faneuil Hall, tonight. I won't go without you, yes.

AMY GOODMAN: I will be with you tonight at 7 pm in Faneuil Hall in Boston.

HOWARD ZINN: But do I have hope, it that what you are asking? Well, I do, I think the American people are basically decent and good people and if they learn the facts and as they are learning the facts, they become aroused as they did during Vietnam, as they did in the years of the civil rights movement.

AMY GOODMAN: We turn now to the second part of our conversation with Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, two of the leading dissidents in this country today. I spoke to them yesterday here in Boston in a rare joint interview. Howard Zinn is one of America's most widely read historians. His classic work *A People's History of the United States* has sold over a million and a half copies, and it's altered how many people teach the nation's history. His latest book is *A Power Governments Cannot Suppress*. Noam Chomsky began teaching linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge over half a century ago. He is the author of dozens of books on linguistics and US foreign policy. His most recent book is called *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy*.

In a wide-ranging interview, we talked about US wars from Iraq to Vietnam, about resistance and about academia. I asked Noam Chomsky about political science professor Norman Finkelstein, one of the country's foremost critics of Israel policy, and his battle to receive tenure at DePaul University, where he has taught for six years. Professor Finkelstein's tenure has been approved at the departmental and college level, but the dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at DePaul has opposed it. A final decision is expected to be made in May. Finkelstein has accused Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz of being responsible for leading the effort to deny him tenure. In an interview with the *Harvard Crimson*, Dershowitz admitted he had sent a letter to DePaul faculty members lobbying against Finkelstein's tenure. I asked Noam Chomsky about the dispute.

NOAM CHOMSKY: The whole thing is outrageous. I mean, he's an outstanding scholar. He has produced book after book. He's got recommendations from some of the leading scholars in the many areas in which he has worked. The faculty -- the departmental committee unanimously recommended him for tenure. It's amazing that he hasn't had full professorship a long time ago.

And, as you were saying, there was a huge campaign led by a Harvard law professor, Alan Dershowitz, to try in a desperate effort to defame him and vilify him, so as to prevent him from getting tenure. The details of it are utterly shocking, and, as you said, it got to the point where the DePaul administration called on Harvard to put an end to this.

AMY GOODMAN: That's very significant, for one university to call on the leadership of another university to stop one of its professors.

NOAM CHOMSKY: To stop this maniac, yeah. What's behind it? It's very simple and straightforward. Norman Finkelstein wrote a book, which is in fact the best compendium that now exists of human rights violations in Israel and the blocking of diplomacy by Israel and the United States, which I mentioned -- very careful scholarly book, as all of his work is, impeccable -- also about the uses of anti-Semitism to try to silence a critical discussion.

And the framework of his book was a critique of a book of apologetics for atrocities and violence by Alan Dershowitz. That was the framework. So he went through Dershowitz's shark claims, showed in great detail that they are completely false and outrageous, that he's lying about the facts, that he's an apologist for violence, that he's a passionate opponent of civil liberties -- which he is -- and he documented it in detail.

Dershowitz is intelligent enough to know that he can't respond, so he does what any tenth-rate lawyer does when you have a rotten case: you try to change the subject, maybe by vilifying opposing counsel. That changes the subject. Now we talk about whether, you know, opposing counsel did or did not commit this iniquity. And the tactic is a very good one, because you win, even if you lose. Suppose your charges against are all refuted. You've still won. You've changed the subject. The subject is no longer the real topic: the crucial facts about Israel, Dershowitz's vulgar apologetics for them, which sort of are reminiscent of the worst days of Stalinism. We've

forgotten all of that. We're now talking about whether Finkelstein did this, that and the other thing. And even if the charges are false, the topic's been changed. That's the basis of it.

Dershowitz has been desperate to prevent this book from being -- first of all, he tried to stop it from being published, in an outlandish effort, which I've never seen anything like it, hiring a major law firm to threaten libel suits, writing to the governor of California -- it was published by the University of California Press. When he couldn't stop the publication, he launched a jihad against Norman Finkelstein, simply to try to vilify and defame him, in the hope that maybe what he's writing will disappear. That's the background.

It's not, incidentally, the first time. I mean, actually, I happen to be very high on Dershowitz's hit list, hate list. And he has also produced outlandish lies about me for years: you know, I told him I was an agnostic about the Holocaust and I wouldn't tell him the time of day, you know, and so on and so forth.

AMY GOODMAN: You mean that he made that charge against you?

NOAM CHOMSKY: Of course, and on and on. I won't even talk about it. What's the reason? It's in print. In fact, you can look at it in the internet. In 1973, I guess it was, the leading Israeli human rights activist, Israel Shahak, who incidentally is a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and Bergen-Belsen and headed a small human rights group in Israel, which was the only real one at the time, came to Boston, had an interview with the *Boston Globe*, in which he identified himself correctly as the chair of the Israeli League of Human Rights. Dershowitz wrote a vitriolic letter to the *Globe*, condemning him, claiming he's lying about Israel, he's even lying about being the chair, he was voted out by the membership.

I knew the facts. In fact, he's an old friend, Shahak. So I wrote a letter to the *Globe*, explaining it wasn't true. In fact, the government did try to get rid of him. They called on their membership to flood the meeting of this small human rights group and vote him out. But they brought it to the courts, and the courts said, yeah, we'd like to get rid of this human rights group, but find a way to do it that's not so blatantly illegal. So I sort of wrote that.

But Dershowitz thought he could brazen it out -- you know, Harvard law professor -- so he wrote another letter saying Shahak's lying, I'm lying, and he challenged me to quote from this early court decision. It never occurred to him for a minute that I'd actually have the transcript. But I did. So I wrote another letter in which I quoted from the court decision, demonstrating that -- as polite, but that Dershowitz is a liar, he's even falsifying Israeli court decisions, he's a supporter of atrocities, and he even is a passionate opponent of civil rights. And this is like the Russian government destroying an Amnesty International chapter by flooding it with Communist Party members to vote out the membership.

Well, he went berserk, and ever since then I have been one of his targets. In fact, anyone who exposes him as what he is is going to be subjected to this technique, because he knows he can't respond, so must return to vilification.

And in the case of Norman Finkelstein, he sort of went off into outer space. But it's an outrageous case. And the fact that it's even being debated is outrageous. Just read his letters of recommendation from literally the leading figures in the many fields in which he works, most respected people.

AMY GOODMAN: Most interesting, the letters of support from the leading Holocaust scholars

like Raul Hilberg.

NOAM CHOMSKY: Raul Hilberg is the founder of Holocaust studies, you know, the most distinguished figure in the field. In fact, he says Norman didn't go far enough. And it's the same -- Avi Shlaim is one of the -- maybe the leading Israeli historian, has strongly supported him, and the same with others. I can't refer to the private correspondence, but it's very strong letters from leading figures in these fields. And it's not surprising that the faculty committee unanimously supported him. I mean, there was, in fact -- they did -- the faculty committee did, in fact, run through in detail the deluge of vilification from Dershowitz and went through it point by point and essentially dismissed it as frivolous.

AMY GOODMAN: They rejected a 12,000-word attack, point by point.

NOAM CHOMSKY: Aside from saying that the very idea of sending it is outrageous. You don't do that in tenure cases.

AMY GOODMAN: So, how do you think it will turn out?

NOAM CHOMSKY: Well, the usual story: this depends on public reaction.

AMY GOODMAN: Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn. We'll come back to them in a minute.

[break]

AMY GOODMAN: We return to my interview with Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, who joined me in the studio here yesterday. We continued to look at the issues of academia in a time of war, so I asked Howard Zinn about his experience at Spelman College, the historically black college for women in Atlanta. Professor Zinn taught at Spelman for seven years before eventually being fired for insubordination. I asked him why he was pushed out.

HOWARD ZINN: I had supported the students, and this was the Civil Rights Movement, right? My students are black women who get involved in the Civil Rights Movement. I support them. The administration is nervous about that, but they can't really say anything publicly, or do anything, because this is the first black president of Spelman College. They have all been white missionaries before that. And so, he doesn't want to do anything then. But when the students come back from -- you might say, "come back from jail" onto the campus and rebel against --

AMY GOODMAN: What year was this?

HOWARD ZINN: This was 1963. And the students rebel against the conditions that they're living in, very paternalistic, very controlling, and I support them in that, then that's too much for the president, and so, although I have tenure and I'm a full professor and I'm chair of the department, I get a letter saying goodbye.

And so, that was my -- you know, what Noam was talking about when you ask him what's going to happen, universities, colleges are not democratic institutions. Really, they're like corporations. The people who have the most power are the people who have the least to do with education. That is, they're not the faculty, they're not the students, they're not even the people who keep the university going -- the buildings and grounds people and the technical people and the secretaries -- no. They're the trustees, the businesspeople, the people with connections, and they're the ones who have the most power, they're the ones who make the decisions. And so, that's why I was fired from

there, and that's why I was almost fired by John Silber at Boston University, but there was a --

AMY GOODMAN: Over what?

HOWARD ZINN: Over a strike. We had a faculty strike. We had a secretary strike. We had a buildings and ground workers strike. We had almost a general strike, almost an IWW strike at Boston University in 1977. And when the faculty had actually won, got a contract and went back to work, some of us on the faculty said we shouldn't go back to work while the secretaries are still on strike. We wouldn't cross their picket lines. We held our classes out on the streets rather than do that. And so, five of us were threatened with firing.

But there was a great clamor among students and faculty and actually across the country. They even got telegrams from France, protesting against this. And so, one of the rare occasions in which the administration, with all its power, backed down. And so, I barely held onto my job.

AMY GOODMAN: You begin your book with two quotes. One of Eugene V. Debs: "While there is a lower class, I am in it; and while there is a criminal element, I am of it; and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free." And Henry David Thoreau: "When the subject has refused allegiance and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished." You also write more about Henry David Thoreau. You write about him going to jail.

HOWARD ZINN: Yeah, well, Thoreau is worth reading today and remembering today, because Thoreau committed just a small act of civil disobedience against the Mexican War. I mean, the Mexican War had some of the same characteristics as the war in Iraq today, and that is that the American people were lied to about the reasons for going into Mexico, and they weren't told that the real reason for going into Mexico was that we wanted Mexican land, which we took at the end of the Mexican War, just as today we're not being told that the real reason for being in Iraq has to do with oil and profits and money. And so, the situation in the Mexican War, against which Thoreau objected, was in many ways, you know, similar.

And Thoreau saw that, and he saw that American boys were dying on the road to Mexico City and we were killing a lot of innocent Mexican people, and so he decided not to pay his taxes and spent just a very short time in jail, but then came out, delivered a lecture on civil disobedience and wrote an essay on the right to disobey the government when the government violates what it's supposed to do, violates the rights of Americans, violates the rights of other people.

And so, that stands as a classic statement for Americans, that it's honorable and right to not to pay your taxes or to refuse military service or to disobey your government when you believe that your government is wrong. And so, the hope is that today more soldiers who are asked to go to Iraq, more young people who are asked to enlist in the war against Iraq, will read Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience, will take its advice to heart, realize that the government is not holy, that what's holy is human life and human freedom and the right of people to resist authority. And so, Thoreau has great lessons for us today.

AMY GOODMAN: Noam Chomsky, as we wrap up, that whole issue of hope and where you see things going in the current Bush administration, what it stands for, and the level of protest in this country. Do you think that level of protest will succeed?

NOAM CHOMSKY: It depends what you mean by "succeed." I mean, I have a slightly more hopeful sense than Howard, at least expressed. I suspect he agrees. It's true that the country, that in terms of the institutional structure -- government for the wealthy and so on -- there hasn't been

much change in 200 years.

But there's been enormous progress, I mean, even in the last forty years, since the '60s. Many rights have been won: rights for minorities, rights for women, rights of future generations, which is what the environmental movement is about. Opposition to aggression has increased. The first solidarity movements in history began in the 1980s, after centuries of European imperialism, and no one ever thought of going to live in an Algerian village to protect the people from French violence, or in a Vietnamese village. Thousands of Americans were doing that in the 1980s in Reagan's terrorist wars. It's now extended over the whole world. There's an international solidarity movement.

The global justice movements, which meet annually in the World Social Forum, are a completely new phenomenon. It's true globalization among people, maybe the seeds of the first true international -- people from all over the world, all walks of life, many ideas which are right on people's minds and agenda, in fact, being implemented about a participatory society, the kind of work that Mike Albert's been doing. These are all new things. I mean, nothing is ever totally new. There are bits and pieces of them in the past, but the changes are enormous.

And the same with opposition to aggression. I mean, after all, the Iraq war is the first war in hundreds of years of Western history, at least the first one I can think of, which was massively protested before it was officially launched. And it actually was underway, we have since learned, but it wasn't officially underway. But it was huge, millions of people protesting it all over the world, so much so that *The New York Times* lamented that there's a second superpower: the population. Well, you know, that's significant and, I think, gives good reason for hope.

There are periods of regression. We're now in a period of regression, but if you look at the cycle over time, it's upwards. And there's no limits that it can't reach.

AMY GOODMAN: Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, two of this country's leading dissidents. We spoke yesterday on Patriot's Day, which is observed here in Massachusetts -- also, I believe, in Maine.

www.democracynow.org