

The Chomsky-Epstein files: Anatomy of petty-bourgeois political decay

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The release of over 3.5 million pages from the Jeffrey Epstein files by the Department of Justice has produced a political earthquake whose aftershocks continue to reverberate around the world. From Washington to London to Tel Aviv, the documents have laid bare a vast network of criminality connecting billionaire financiers, heads of state, intelligence operatives, celebrities and academics in a web of sex trafficking, blackmail and corruption that implicates virtually every major institution of capitalist rule.

The Epstein files have exposed connections between Epstein and Donald Trump, Bill Clinton, Bill Gates, Ehud Barak, Prince Andrew, Elon Musk, Howard Lutnick and scores of other representatives of the financial oligarchy and political establishment, as well as numerous prominent academics. Yet despite ample evidence of criminal activity at the highest levels, the Trump administration's position remains: There is no one to prosecute.

Among the most politically significant revelations are those involving Noam Chomsky, the 97-year-old MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) linguist and anarchist intellectual who has long been promoted as the world's foremost "left-wing" critic of American imperialism. Thousands of emails and text messages related to Chomsky have been released so far as part of the Epstein files, documenting an extensive personal bond spanning multiple years between the notorious sex trafficker and the academic once characterized by the *New York Times* as "the most important intellectual alive."

In one letter, Valeria Chomsky wrote to Epstein: "Dear Jeffrey, We count you as our best friend. I mean 'the' one. It is always great to see you." In another message, Noam Chomsky concluded with: "Like real friendship, deep and sincere and everlasting from both of us, Noam and Valeria." These are not the words of a man who, as he told the *Wall Street Journal* in 2023, merely "knew him [Epstein] and we met occasionally."

The released records indicate that Chomsky traveled on Epstein's private aircraft (widely known as the "Lolita Express"), accepted lodging at Epstein's properties in New York and Paris and repeatedly conveyed interest in visiting Little St. James Island, the Caribbean location where Epstein perpetrated his most egregious crimes.

There is no evidence that Chomsky, who was in his late 80s during this period, participated in any of Epstein's sex crimes. One would have to be willfully oblivious, however, not to have known what Epstein was, and the documents make clear that Chomsky knew something was going on—which he excused, minimized and actively helped to conceal. These revelations have shattered his reputation as a principled opponent of the ruling class and a man of unimpeachable integrity.

During the period leading directly to Epstein's July 2019 arrest on federal sex trafficking charges, as media coverage intensified and revealed the vast scale of Epstein's crimes, Chomsky provided Epstein with public relations counsel. In a February 2019 email, Chomsky expressed empathy for the "horrible way you are being treated in the press and public" and described investigative journalists as "vultures," counseling Epstein, "I

think the best way to proceed is to ignore it."

Most significantly, the documents expose Chomsky as a participant in the sordid social and political networks of the ruling class, seeking out meetings with the fascist ideologue Steve Bannon and Israeli war criminal Ehud Barak. Chomsky's pretenses of "holding truth to power" have been irretrievably compromised. He has combined personal self-degradation and political betrayal.

Two characteristics of the American petty-bourgeois intelligentsia are highlighted in the Chomsky-Epstein correspondence: an infatuation with celebrity and wealth and a lack of genuine intellectual independence from bourgeois society. The focus of this essay is to draw out the political lessons—what this reveals about petty-bourgeois, anarchist, left-liberal politics and what conclusions workers and youth must arrive at.

The fraud of the "principled dissident"

Born in 1928 in Philadelphia, Noam Chomsky rose to academic fame in the late 1950s through his contributions to theoretical linguistics at MIT. His "generative grammar" was hailed as a paradigm shift in the study of language. But Chomsky's broader reputation was built on his political writings, beginning with his 1967 essay "The Responsibility of Intellectuals" and his opposition to the Vietnam War.

Over the ensuing decades, Chomsky produced more than 150 books on politics, media and imperialism, including the 1988 work *Manufacturing Consent*. The book's central thesis—that mass media functions as a propaganda system serving elite interests—was presented as a devastating indictment of capitalist democracy. But its underlying message was deeply pessimistic, arguing that the masses are passive victims of manipulation, and the best one can hope for is to expose the mechanisms of deception.

The pseudo-left have long treated Chomsky as a semi-deity. *Jacobin*, the house organ of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), published an article in June 2024 headlined "Let's Celebrate Noam Chomsky, the Intellectual and Moral Champion." In a 2022 interview with Chomsky, journalist Chris Hedges introduced him as "America's greatest intellectual," stating that "all intellectuals of our generation, at least if they're genuine intellectuals, are in some sense children of Noam Chomsky."

This appraisal, to the extent that it is justified, does little credit to Hedges or other "intellectuals" of his generation. Chomsky could appear as a giant only to intellectual Lilliputians steeped in the anti-communist environment of the past half-century, who have no connection with or understanding of the heritage of Marxist thought and genuine revolutionary activity rooted in the struggles of the working class.

As documented extensively by British anthropologist Chris Knight,

Chomsky's professional life at MIT was inseparable from defense establishment financing, a fact that the university's own Vietnam Era activists emphasized when they condemned the institution as "a part of the US war machine." Chomsky's employment originated through Dr. Jerome Wiesner, a defense scientist who had been instrumental in developing America's nuclear missile infrastructure and who later served as a senior Kennedy administration official. His theoretical work on linguistic structures received military funding, with Pentagon officials anticipating that this research might eventually prove applicable to communications and command technologies. Nearly a dozen of his graduate students subsequently worked at the MITRE Corporation, a defense contractor whose research mandate explicitly included developing "US Air Force-supplied command and control systems."

Already during his MIT tenure, Chomsky formed close associations with figures whose institutional roles contradicted his public anti-militarist stance. Notable among these was John Deutch, a fellow MIT faculty member who had directed Pentagon nuclear and chemical weapons programs before his appointment to lead the CIA. When the *New York Times* inquired about Deutch, Chomsky offered remarkable praise: "He has more honesty and integrity than anyone I've ever met in academic life, or any other life." He added: "If somebody's got to be running the CIA, I'm glad it's him."

Chomsky's political trajectory was characterized by the same fundamental contradiction. While his anarchism positioned him as a critic of state power in the abstract, his actual politics consistently led him back to accommodation with the ruling class he claimed to oppose. He endorsed every Democratic presidential candidate for decades, promoting the bankrupt strategy of "lesser evilism" that has produced not the defeat of the right but its continuous growth.

In foreign policy, Chomsky repeatedly provided "left" cover for imperialist interventions when they were packaged in the language of "human rights." Most significantly, in Syria, Chomsky emerged as a vocal advocate for the maintenance of US military forces on Syrian soil to "protect" the Kurds, joining David Harvey, Judith Butler and others in a letter that provided a pseudo-left gloss for the illegal US occupation. "In my opinion, it makes sense for the United States to maintain a presence which would deter an attack on the Kurdish areas," he told *The Intercept* in 2018.

In recent decades, Chomsky became increasingly explicit in his pessimism about any possibility of revolutionary change. In a revealing 2021 interview with *Jacobin*, when asked whether socialism remained a useful political horizon for addressing the climate crisis, he responded bluntly: "We're not going to overthrow capitalism in a couple of decades. You can continue working for socialism—but you have to recognize that the solution to the climate crisis is going to have to come within some kind of regimented capitalist system." This amounted to an admission that, whatever his theoretical criticisms of capitalism, Chomsky had concluded that the existing order would persist and that radicals must accommodate themselves to it.

This pessimism flowed from a deeper political orientation. For all his voluminous writings against the ruling class, Chomsky always saw power as residing with the elites, not the working class. Opposing Marxism and Lenin's conception of the vanguard party, he rejected the need to politically educate and organize workers for revolutionary struggle. Chomsky's aim was never to raise the consciousness of the working class but to influence the thinking of the ruling class and its intellectual representatives.

This helps account for Chomsky's readiness to cultivate relationships with figures like Epstein, Barak and Bannon. He sought proximity to power because, despite all his rhetoric, that is where he believed consequential decisions were made. The man who told workers that capitalism could not be overthrown found himself increasingly at home in

the company of those who ruled it.

The dimensions of the Epstein relationship

Chomsky and his wife Valeria were introduced to Epstein in 2015 at one of Chomsky's professional events. By that time, Epstein's criminal activity was a matter of public record. After 36 survivors, including some as young as 14, came forward, Epstein had been convicted in 2008 on charges related to child sex crimes. He received a lenient 18-month sentence and served only 13 months, with US Attorney Alex Acosta reportedly stating he was told to "back off" as Epstein "belonged to intelligence."

The history of Epstein's criminally abusive conduct did not trouble Chomsky. The access to gaudy wealth clearly overwhelmed him. The documents show that Epstein provided the Chomskys with a taste of luxury, including stays at his palatial 51,000-square-foot Manhattan mansion, bookings at the \$1,400-per-night Manhattan Suite at the Mark Hotel, flights on his private jet and use of his Paris apartment. "Dear Jeffrey, We had a wonderful day. Valson [Epstein's butler] took good care of us. Drove us to the Louvre, went to pick us up, brought us to your wonderful apartment for a delicious meal," Valeria wrote after visiting the Paris property.

Epstein offered his other properties as well. "You should also feel free to use my Palm Beach house. ... You will be well looked after," he wrote in February 2016. On multiple occasions, Chomsky expressed his desire to visit Little St. James Island, the site where the U.S. Virgin Islands Attorney General alleged that dozens of girls, some as young as 12, were imprisoned and raped. "Can't tell you how tempting the invitation is," Chomsky replied to one offer in February 2016. Months later, responding to an invitation from Epstein to visit him in New York or the Caribbean, Chomsky wrote, "Valeria's always keen on New York. I'm really fantasizing about the Caribbean island."

The two exchanged gifts, including a cashmere sweater for Chomsky's 87th birthday and food hampers from Carnegie Deli. They shared sexual jokes; after Epstein quipped about Chomsky's age and sexual potency, Chomsky replied, "Ouch."

As the legal walls closed in around Epstein in late 2018 and early 2019, following the *Miami Herald's* investigation, the billionaire turned to Chomsky as an unofficial crisis manager. "Noam. I'd love your advice on how I handle my putrid press," Epstein wrote in February 2019. Chomsky counseled Epstein to remain silent.

When Epstein sent Chomsky a draft op-ed written in the third person presenting himself as a near-saint, Chomsky replied: "It's a powerful and convincing statement." He was, by Epstein's own account, "all in" for a planned documentary designed to rehabilitate the sex trafficker's public image.

Significantly, Epstein became Chomsky's most trusted financial and legal adviser, a role that led to a near-complete rupture between Chomsky and his three children. They objected strenuously to Chomsky's insistence that Richard Kahn—Epstein's personal accountant, whom a 2021 lawsuit described as the "captain of Epstein's international sex crime ring"—be placed on the board of the family trust. Chomsky sided with Epstein and Valeria against his own children, forwarding all the family correspondence to Epstein for guidance.

Dining with war criminals: Chomsky and Ehud Barak

Among the meetings Epstein arranged for Chomsky was a private dinner with former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak in the summer of 2015. “I hope [you] enjoyed yesterday as much as the Baraks and I,” Epstein wrote afterward.

Barak served as Israeli prime minister from 1999 to 2001 and defense minister from 2007 to 2013. In the latter role, he directed Operation Cast Lead, the 22-day assault on Gaza from December 2008 to January 2009 that killed between 1,385 and 1,419 Palestinians, the vast majority civilians, including over 300 children. The UN Goldstone Report found “strong evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity.”

Barak’s name appears thousands of times in the Epstein files. The documents show he stayed repeatedly at Epstein’s New York apartment, explored numerous business ventures with the sex trafficker, and was photographed entering Epstein’s Manhattan townhouse with his face partially concealed.

Chomsky has built a substantial portion of his reputation on criticism of Israeli oppression of the Palestinians. In a letter of support found in Epstein’s files, Chomsky wrote: “On another occasion, Jeffrey arranged a meeting with former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, whose record I had studied carefully and written about.” He claims this was to obtain a firsthand account of why peace talks collapsed at Taba in 2001.

But the emails reveal a very different atmosphere than a tense confrontation between an anti-Zionist intellectual and a war criminal. The meeting was a friendly social dinner, organized by and including Epstein, a man whom an FBI informant described as a “co-opted Mossad Agent” and who had documented ties to Israeli intelligence. A genuine opponent of Israeli war crimes would not accept a cozy dinner arranged by an alleged intelligence asset with one of their chief architects.

United in anti-communism: Chomsky’s meetings with Bannon

The most politically explosive revelation in the entire Epstein cache—and the one that the pseudo-left has studiously avoided discussing—concerns Chomsky’s active pursuit of a meeting with Steve Bannon, the fascist ideologue and Trump’s former chief strategist.

The documents show that in 2018, Epstein invited the Chomskys to a private dinner party with Barak and Bannon. Chomsky expressed regret at missing the opportunity and then emailed Bannon directly: “My wife Valeria and I were quite disappointed to have missed you the other night, and hope that we can arrange something else before too long. Lots to talk about.” Months later, Valeria personally invited Bannon to their Arizona home, writing, “Jeffrey is a very dear friend, and we look forward to meeting you. Would it be possible for you to come 4pm tomorrow?”

Bannon did visit, and the two evidently enjoyed each other’s company, with a widely-circulated photo showing them laughing and embracing.

Bannon is among the most prominent fascists in America, perhaps second only to Trump. As executive chairman of Breitbart News, Bannon transformed the outlet into what he openly described as “the platform for the alt-right.” As chief strategist of the Trump White House from January to August 2017, he was instrumental in implementing the Muslim ban, the family separation policy and Trump’s broader xenophobic agenda. After his departure from the White House, he worked to build an international fascist movement, courting the French National Rally, Italy’s Lega, the German AfD and Hungary’s Viktor Orbán. He later played a central organizing role in the January 6, 2021 coup attempt and was convicted of contempt of Congress for refusing to comply with the January 6 Committee’s subpoena.

What did Chomsky believe he had to “talk about” with such a figure? What is the intersection between a self-described anarchist and the

architect of Trumpian fascism?

The answer lies in what unites them: a visceral and ferocious anti-communism.

Chomsky has spent decades attacking Marxism and the 1917 October Revolution. In his 1989 lecture “What Was Leninism?,” he declared: “Lenin was a right-wing deviation of the socialist movement.” He characterized the October Revolution as “what’s called a revolution but in my view ought to be called a coup,” and claimed that Lenin and Trotsky “immediately devoted themselves to destroying the liberatory potential” of the Soviets and factory councils. He went further, asserting that the Bolsheviks created “the basic proto-fascist structures” later refined by Stalin, thereby equating the leaders of the first workers’ revolution in history with the very fascism they fought.

In *Understanding Power* (2002), Chomsky dismissed the concept of a revolutionary vanguard party as “an intellectual scam.” On Trotsky, he has been particularly venomous, slandering the founder of the Red Army and leader of the Left Opposition against Stalinism as an advocate of a “labor army which is submissive to the control of a single leader.”

Bannon attacks “cultural Marxism” and glorifies Christian nationalism. Chomsky denounces Lenin and Trotsky as “right-wing” authoritarians and equates the dictatorship of the proletariat with “proto-fascism.” The rhetoric differs; the target is the same. Both seek to discredit the revolutionary movement of the working class.

Within weeks of meeting with Bannon in Tucson, Chomsky stood before 700 people at the Old South Church in Boston on May 27, 2019 and delivered a speech broadcast on *Democracy Now!* in which he described Bannon as “the impresario” of an “ultranationalist, reactionary international” movement and warned of the spread of fascism. The hypocrisy is staggering. The man who had just gladly hosted Bannon in his home, who had written that they had “lots to talk about,” who had his wife tell Bannon that Epstein was “a very dear friend,” then went on national television to posture as a fearless critic of the very fascism he was cultivating in private.

Conclusion

The exposure of Chomsky is politically significant, but it must be placed in its proper context. While there is no evidence of criminal activity by Chomsky himself, the 3.5 million pages of Epstein files implicate broad sections of the ruling class—presidents, prime ministers, billionaires, intelligence operatives—in sex trafficking, rape and the exploitation of children. The *World Socialist Web Site* demands the full release of all the Epstein files, unredacted except where necessary to protect victims, and the immediate prosecution of every individual implicated in these crimes.

The events of early 2026 have demonstrated that the real force of opposition to the degeneracy and criminality of the oligarchy comes from the working class. On January 7, federal immigration agents murdered Renée Nicole Good in Minneapolis. Two weeks later they gunned down Alex Pretti. The killings provoked mass protests in Minneapolis and across the US on January 23 and January 30, under the banner “ICE Out,” with workers walking off the job to denounce the Trump administration’s terror campaign.

The term “general strike” has reentered the political lexicon through the direct experience of millions of workers confronting the murderous violence of the state. These developments confirm in practice what Marxism has always insisted and Chomsky has always denied: the working class is the revolutionary force in modern society.

Contrary to Chomsky’s lifelong slanders against Marxism, the independent, politically conscious mobilization of the international

working class is the only force capable of putting an end to the system that produces Epsteins and Bannons, and the Chomskys who commingle with them.

Workers and youth must draw the sharpest conclusions from this experience. They must reject the cynicism, pessimism and class collaborationism of Chomsky and every variant of petty-bourgeois pseudo-radicalism. They must turn to the revolutionary optimism of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky—the conviction, grounded in the entire experience of the class struggle, that the international working class, organized and led by a conscious socialist vanguard, can overthrow capitalism, bring the criminals of the oligarchy to justice and build a truly humane society based on social equality.



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