

Sudhanva's Opening:

.. of our time.. He has.. he has consistently tried to make sense of the world, and .. and brought all his wide range of reading, learning and understanding, and presented it not simply to the academic community, but to the.. but to general reading public at large..ahh.. his essays in particular on..on the Iraq war, on the war in Afghanistan, on the current sort of unfolding of the imperialist logic across the world, and in particular in the middle east. In the FRONTLINE magazine, these have been a series of very serious and consistent essays he has written over the last several years. As well as for instance two three years ago, he wrote a series of very fine articles – long articles, on what is currently happening across Latin America, trying to make sense of ..trying to make sense of that tide of change. And so on.. and it so all of these concerns that we want him to bring into his presentation in some way or the other, and may I invite Prof. Aijaz Ahmed. *(Reading 01: 28)*

Claps..

Prof Aijaz Ahmed.

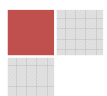
(Reading 01: 54) I am deeply grateful for your invitation. I want to apologies to you, but mainly I want to register my regret that I had so little time to actually listen to the discussion which had to be interrupted because I had to speak. I wish that were not so. It is so rare for me to be able to listen ot discussions about theatre, about related art forms, public spaces, public interventions that I really think that I wish this interruptions did not happen. I wont repeat to you, because you are also doing politics but I was thinking that line from Stan Red and Black which says that "introduction of politics into a work of art is like a gun shot in the middle of a performance" (cough). You are doing politics – but that is not the point. I go so absorbed by the discussion that I actually have forgotten what I was going to say.. so let me begin with Rain. (AL) Ahh!! I got in very late last night, and this morning as I sat down to look at the programme, and I believe that there is going to be a performance that I am going... that I am looking forward to very much to watching about a person, a woman who is drenched in rain for three days directly. There is even in that short description there is a talk of seeds, its about what does it mean to be drenched in rain. The author of the play talks about the play coming out of an experience in which she was drenched in rain. This place has been drenched in rain.

I come from Delhi, I was born in UP, when I was a child there used to be rainy season during winter – for which the hindi word in my part of the world at least was 'Mahawat'. It was a full fledged season of rain. This year in Delhi there was no rain in winter. *Mahawat khatam ho gaya*. As I was coming here yesterday, driving through that lovely forest, with all this rain outside, idyllic virtually, I asked myself – where does this rain come from?

(Reading 05: 00) Un-seasonal rain. What does it mean to be drenched in rain – at a time when you should not be drenched in rain? I have no way of knowing where this rain comes from. But I have extremely deep sense that it comes from Imperialism. It is what they are calling global warming – one of the effects of global warming., all around the world is unseasonal change, unseasonal depressions in the seas and the oceans – cyclones unseasonal, and not raining when it is supposed to rain.

I think the play is about rain as a natural phenomenon. We have to increasingly talk about rain as an unnatural phenomenon – because of the fundamental things that imperialism does is it colonise nature. That is absolutely the most fundamental thing. That imperialism does – whether it is mining, whether it is agriculture, whether it is understanding of plant as nothing but a chemical compound, which can be taken up, reduced to its chemical properties, taken into the laboratories of the imperialist centers replicated through pharmaceutical and other chemical processes & patented - every single natural species must be patented as a commercial object. Through mining of the kind that capitalism and imperialism has done, making land unproductive for anything else, except for that compound which they need for the production of energy in order to create the kind of capitalist industry, which is ruining our natural environments.

(Reading 07: 38) you were taking of bodies, I have often wondered what happens to a body when it gets used to eating fast. How does it move then? What happens to its movements? Does it learn to move much faster? When I was a child in UP, growing up in a village, where there were no doctors or anything – *eh hindi aatihain logonko?* (audience murmer) *hamaare ek hakeem saab aaththe. Aur do then mahine rehtete. Aur hamain who khana sikhate. Battes dafe chabao – chote bachche waha baitie huye chabaye. Sehej*



se khana. What you eat- how you eat, not just what you eat, but how you eat. Imperialism will teach you **what to eat and how to eat**. And that connection, that .. that poor hakim was trying to preserve will be transformed. Bodies will be transformed from inside. You were discussing about bodies. (*Reading 09:12*)

(*Reading 09:13*) in films incongruously I was thinking actually this morning of bodies. Male bodies. Where does Hritik Roshan's body come from as against Dilip KumAr's or Raj Kapoor's? This idea that handsome desirable successful film actor should look like this. And he is not the only one. Its an industry product that is now prevalling. This is how the body should move, this is how it should stand.

(*Reading 10:03*) Two things imperialism does. One, I was talking about nature and I could go on and on, and when we are talking of nature, the most fundamental part of nature –for human beings is the human nature. You can perceive what happens to nature outside. You externalize it, you talk about **that** as nature. But it is actually transformation of yourself as a natural organism. Centuries of accumulation of knowing how to belong in the rest of nature, undone, over a period of perhaps two hundred years much more speedily soon over the period of the last fifty years. The other thing that imperialism does is the – in our time is the colonization of the unconscious. Two things imperialism abolishes ...our nature and the unconscious, because it will colonise the unconscious. It will surround you with its images everywhere. You cannot travel, you cannot step out of the house without encountering images that they have produced ... for you..... I don't know how many of you have seen big cities which don't have billboards...since 1990 there has not been such a city. When the soviet union went, my Hungarian friends wrote to me and said "come soon, this is the last time you will see Budapest". .. Within a year the city was plastered with billboards. Every city ... beautiful cities from Lubiana, Hungary - I mean Budapest, Prague... if you have seen them without billboards, then you know what a city looks like. If you have not seen a city without billboards then you don't know what a city looks like. They will colonize your unconscious in your home.

(*Reading 13: 02*) The difference between the colonial period and the imperialist period is that during the colonial period there used to be a colonial classroom... for which infact a very small number of Indian population was exposed. Most of the Indian population did not even go to those classrooms. Now the imperialistically produced, centrally produced images colonise your house holds. You become passive recipient of those images. Everyone of those tv watching sessions is essentially a study circle.. in imperialist esthetics, in imperialist value systems.. imperialist notions of desire..... What must you desire? Your sexuality? Your sense of what gives you happiness? In every respect they will teach you. Everyday, they entire your homes. Ninety percent of images are produced essentially by five corporate conglomerations – they or their subsidiaries. That is what surrounds us. Imperialism is something you live. In fact, imperialism is something that lives you... You struggle against it. I am talking about the system of domination I am not talking about your being. You struggle against it.

(*Reading 15: 00*) It is your human nature, the surviving remnants of your human nature.- that you will resist. And you will continue to resist and there will be resistance all over the world. But that is what you are up against so far as your selves are concerned. Everyone of us.

(*Reading 15:28*) Ah!! The title for today's talk actually, I was reading Martin Luther King, and the phrase belongs to him. And I was reading him by the way because the American elections are things that interest me. And I was trying to actually think.. how far.. Black American life has come from Martin Luther King to Barack Obama. And that is how I was reading, and I just picked up that phrase.. just a way of paying him a compliment. Ahh!!! I wanted to begin there, because I wanted to begin in the surroundings where we are something I heard about the body. Ahhh! I wanted to sort of think about that.

Pause (Reading 16:35) The invasion of Iraq actually began with theatre. It was a theatre meant to shock and awe. This is theatrical language as old as Aristotle – the function of theatre among others. There are many functions of theatre - but one of them is to shock. One of them is to produce in you a sense of awe. It began with the theatre. It began with a performance and a demonstration, which had nothing at all to do with the job at hand which was the conquest of the city of Bagdad a broken city. A city that did not need all that spectacle. It was the use of the spectacular because they knew with television it will enter into the homes and hearts of everybody. And it was us who were the objects of that shock and awe. Certainly the population of Bhagdad, certainly Iraquis, certainly Arabs. But all of us who watched it on television. Imperialism is also a spectacle. Imperialism also knows that if the spectacular ceases to impress you, if the sheer demonstration of power ceases to impress you, there might be trouble. Because it is a spectacle of power rather than the actual having of power.



(Reading 18: 45) For example The conquest of Iraq was very easy. The country had been broken by some 15 years of the most atrocious kinds of sanctions, military occupation actually of Northern Iraq, in the sense, all sorts of things and I wont go into all that...that was easy. Establishing imperialist power in Iraq, that was difficult, has been difficult; because for that you have to come down in the ground. Its easier to conquer for imperialism from the skies. Much harder to occupy once they come in the ground. The actual exercise of power has great limits. The spectacular was much easier even for imperialism to manage. (Cough) how to talk about imperialism in very short... *kitna kitna samay hain? (Digression in hindi. in Hindi)*

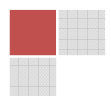
(Reading 20: 21) you don't want to listen for that long. .

hmmm let me begin by what one would first of all briefly mean by imperialism as connected with the .. when I say the urgency of now I really mean the imperialism of our time, and by our time I actually mean the world that we now have certainly since about 1989. In the larger frame it is also since the second world war and let me tell you very very briefly why I use these dates. Capitalism has always had a globalizing tendency. The historic task of capitalism already stated thus by twenty- eight year old Karl Marx – the historic task of capitalism is to create a world market. Its really quite astonishing how many times the word global appears in that 30 page text called the **Communist Manifesto** drafted in great hurry by Marx when he was 28 years old, and in great hurry because it had to go to the press and Engles had not done his job – so it was a very hurried sort of text. (cough) yeah, Engles was supposed to produced the text. Anyways (cough) globalization and all of that it is already there its predicted- its *(Reading 22.02)* explained at great lengths in other texts.. its what the processes are going to be .. its what its going to look like and so on and so that's not the thing. And indeed during that period, the leading colonial powers conquered the world. They used to say about Great Britain that it is the empire where the sun never sets because ah, because it spanned the globe, and as the sun moved, some part or the other the sun was there ahmm in some part or the other of the empire.

(Reading 22: 36) The difficulty was for them during the colonial period that in doing so they divided the world – into different colonial empires. The British, the French, ahh primarily but also other smaller ones. Its only with the second world war actually that the different colonial empires are dissolved and one single empire emerges. It is also at that point that there emerges one pre eminent power in the world – in the capitalist world itself, far beyond the power of any other – namely the United States. The Second World War actually ruins Germany, Great Britain, France and so on except for the United States which is a great beneficiary and then inherits the entire empire ahhh that used to be. The entire capitalist world that used to be divided among them. But during roughly the same time, two things had happened. The primary thing was that the first world war produced the Bolshevik revolution and the second world war produced the Chinese and number of other systemic shifts of that time in Eastern Europe, so that a third humanity was by 1950 not available for capitalist universalization –which is a phrase I much prefer to **globalization**, and things of that kind.

the other was de colonization. And what de colonization did the great wave of dismantling of the colonies and rise of the sovereign powers – sovereign governments was that in a number of countries, notably India, there arose bourgeois zeal *(Reading 25:00)* which wanted to stay within the capitalist system, did not challenge the capitalist system as such but wanted to have as much as an independent development by negotiating with imperialism as possible and that was particularly possible for countries like India and Egypt or countries of that sort because there was that other pole o the Soviet Union, and anytime the Americans said something unacceptable, unbearable they say, “well well well we'll go to the soviet union and get it from them”. (cough).Well so this is what we call a patriotic national bourgeois zeal which among other things put great limits to the penetration of our countries by Imperialist primarily American capital. I wont go into any great details of that.. but there was also a third thing which was going on inside the advanced capitalist countries. One is that countries like Germany ..like France, Italy..and underneath the fascist government Spain, Portugal and so on had major communist parties contending for power, and whether or not any part of Europe or western Europe would go communist was settled as late as 1976. '75, the defeat of the Portugese Revolution,'76, the definitive defeat of the PCI the communist party of Italy in the 1976. So right up to 1976, there was the possibility that parts of the Western Europe may go communist.

*(Reading 26:55)*Ahh the...similarly the war, I mean alongside that.. the war had destroyed the economies of the leading capitalist countries. Germany by the way was divided between a communist Germany and a Germany which became the of NATO. So these questions were alive in Europe. The other was the question of rebuilding those economies, and because those economies, and because the reconstruction was going to go on in Europe at a very high level, Ahh you could guarantee full employment. And in order



to roll back the possibility of communism, you had to create a very radical version of full employment, welfare state, so that left wing social democracy ruled there. What begins to happen in the world.. I.(coughs). by the 1970s is that all three of these things enter into a crisis. That is to say.. by then the contradictions of the kind of capitalism we were building in countries India became quite clear, I wont go into all the det.. reasons for it, but that you could not create an independent capitalist country within the imperialist system became quite clear in India, and my own view is the real issue was the peasantry. I think that every country that became independent of colonialism had a choice to make. It had to either align with the peasantry, make a great agrarian revolution even of the capitalist kind, which would give you the mass base with which to resist the foreign power. Or you could align yourself with imperialism and suppress the peasantry. And the poorest peasantry – in fact what you do is divide the peasantry between its rich sections and its poorest sections. You strengthen the richer peasantry by carrying out certain kinds of agrarian reforms in order to oppress and repress all the rest. And here I am using the word peasantry in the widest sense of the word which also includes forest people and the other traditional and indigenous peoples.

Every country made the same choice. (*Reading 30:00*) It essentially aligned itself with imperialism against peasantry. And I believe that in India, that was the secret of why by the 1970s the national bourgeois project of creating an independent Indian capitalism came to be essentially defeated. Because by then for thirty years you had created a kind of capitalism that was much too ridden with contradictions but I wont go into all of that. But that means so.. the national bourgeois project was over by the seventies and the early eighties. I believe that the emergency was an expression of that particular crisis of the sort of the final demise of the Nehruvian states so to speak from one side and the other side that happened in the emergency was that those who led the movement against the emergency had a clear choice to make, because against the emergency were ranged two political forces that were based on political cadre who could in fact organize the underground cells, the various forms of resistance to emergency and so on and so forth.. and the two cadre based organizations of that kind were the RSS on the right, and the CPM on the left. And Jaiprakash Narayan made the strategic decision to align himself with the RSS – hence the first Janata government that comes into being is the government in which Mr Advani and Mr Vajpayee and others become respectable. For the first time in India. So the crisis of the emergency was actually a comprehensive crisis on the one hand it was a crisis of the decade more or less, the Nehruvian state so far as the Indira Gandhi side of it was concerned. And on the other hand, the alternative that.. that arises and which is supported by the leaders of the anti – emergency movement privileges the RSS. Anyways the crisis actually unfolds after the 1970s inside India – it got beaten back in various parts of the world in Indonesia it involves blood bath of about half a billion people, many of them communists other accused of being communists and so on in Egypt and so on. So the Third World National Bourgeois project is really over by the late 1970s the same thing happens in Latin America through military dictator ships in one country after another and Cuba is the only country that really survives. Ahh (cough) the other side of it.. of course.. again that I will not go into is the failure and ultimate demise of the communist project in the Soviet Union and other countries - when that crisis began can be debated – in my view it began in 1978 in China, with the Deng reforms that is where I think the restoration of capitalism in the formal socialist countries actually begins and my view is that what Gorbachov and others tried to do in Russia was in fact building on the Deng reforms in China. China was actually, I think, the model for Gorbachov. But anyway – ah- you have that and therefore what you have in the eighties is an going from the the late 1980, going into our own time that is to say from about 1990, to let us say to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, is an imperialism intoxicated by its sense of power. A hundred years of a pitched battle that it had fought (*reading 35: 00*) against the socialist and left nationalist projects - it had finally won. And it set out to teach everybody a lesson. That is the secret of new liberalism, that is the secret of what we call globalisation, that is the secret of this immense *aggressivity* of the Iraq war and other things are concerned- come September 11 2001, and I remember I was in Toronto at that time, I remember saying to somebody the first day, if they treat it simply for what it is which is a crime, it is a crime for a bunch of two dozen to highjack airplanes and ram them into buildings – it's a crime – they are dead and now you go and find who sent them, and you bring them into a court of law and give them the punishment that they deserve. As they did not do any such thing and as no bombs fell, I tell you third day I wrote an article which published in FRONT LINE I was frightened – it took me three days to get frightened. But by then I knew that they were going to do a global thing. They were going to go after country after country – that they will use that one act of crime by a small number of people to destroy country after country. So by 20th of September that year George Bush assembled the two houses of US congress, and announced a war that does not end, that is his phrase – a war against terror is a war that does not end – it will be fought in forty, fifty, sixty countries he said, it will be fought in ways that will be visible and it will be fought in ways that will not be visible. And so on. This was the real exercise of that arrogant power in which they think – they thought they were going to be able to march from one country to the other. As the slogan in



Washington used to be among the neo-cons at that time – hmmm- onward from Bagdad to Damascus to Riyadh to Tehran – and the joke in the upper circles of the US bureaucracy used to be – Soldiers go to Iraq, real men go to Tehran – they are just dying to go into Tehran. That was the project. And then it got stalled in Iraq itself. If you go back to the article that I wrote at the time of the invasion of Afghanistan – you'll recall Sudhanva – I wrote in that they are not going to be able to defeat the Taliban. The Taliban will come back. They are undefeatable. It is quite clear to those of us who did not have the blinkered eyes of the imperialists themselves – that these are not defeat able forces. You can create enormous amount of cruelty and bloodshed but these are not people who can be defeated. There are reasons for it. So that is one side of things that is going on. About that the only thing that I have to say – I could go on and on about that – the only thing I have to say is that five years into that war the United States is completely stuck, it is completely dependent on Iran for ruling Afghan.. for ruling Iraq, I wont go into the completely cynical game that the Iranians are playing but the fact of the matter is at the pleasure of the Iranians that the Americans rule Iraq (*Reading 40:00*) and one of the calculations of the Iranians is that the longer the Americans are bogged down in Iraq, the safer it is for the rest of the world. Therefore let us give them a government but let us not give them an exit route. It is absolute real politick – we will give you the government – the two major Shea configurations which the Iranians had confected – one of them on the express orders of Ayatollah Quomeni formed the government for the Americans. SO anyway they are bogged down, seventy some odd percent of the American population says that the war must be ended forthwith, same percentages against the invasion of Iran – not that it gets reflected in the ruling politics of the United States, but poll after poll shows that Americans are incapable now of sustaining either the human or financial costs of another major war. The US dollar which used to exchange for Rs. 50, at the beginning of the Iraq war, is now exchanging for Rs. 39 – 40. It is about to collapse as the global reserve currency –it is a very serious possibility that over the next four or five years the dollar will cease to be the reserve currency of the world. Ahmmm – again I wont go into that. But there is all of that American economy is in shambles – ahh so on.

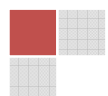
(*Reading 42:00*) But what I really want to talk about is the one corner of the – in the world where some very interesting ways of challenging imperialism are coming up. And that is Latin America. There is of course the grand old man (laughter). Fidel, about whom I just wrote an article in FRONTLINE. I think what Cuban achievement is, in which it is unique, is to hold out a vision and a promise. It did not have the material power to build a communist society in any remotely meaningful sense of the word. What it has done is (a) that one of the poorest countries of the world, if you judge it by per capita income or industrial accumulation or any indices that are supposed to be growth indices – it has given you the healthiest population in the world. Healthier than Scandinavia, not just north America, healthier than Scandinavia. It has given you a population, the only country in the third world, where people die now of only of the diseases of which the people in the rich countries die. Cancer and Heart attack. Not by communicable diseases, not by diseases coming out of mal nutrition. That makes you prone to diseases. None of those causes of death any longer are there in Cuba. What you can do with very little , it has given you with those means, a population that is much better educated than the Industrial giants of Latin America or Brazil, Argentina or something as average population better educated than the United States so far as for example as the incidence of high school graduates are concerned, or proportion of highly trained (*Reading 45: 00*) personnel are concerned as proportion of the population. Its doctors are active in 22 countries. When Pakistan, the US client par excellence has that horrible earthquake, two days flat big teams of Cuban doctors arrive and fly into the earth quake zones. It is not that they are looking for geo political advantage or that Pakistan is in anyway aligned politically, it's a gift. The idea that what you have and what you know should be a gift. And that states can do it. I went to Venezuela soon after the 2001 elections – 1998 ahhh when Hugo Chavez came into power, but that's only nominal – 2001 it begins and I went there first time I think in early 2003, and Cuban doctors were already there. Ahhh!! There is a small circular place.. build.. call it building, call it hut, call it what ever you will which would be about the size of this area. It's a round one with windows all over so that light and air comes in. It is two storied, the doctor lives upstairs, the clinic is downstairs, its has one .. ah.. ambulance, there were fifteen thousand of them already, and the doctor would live there alone whether married or not ahh they would come without the family, and men and women, ahhh half the Cuban doctors are women, and therefore they are on duty all the time. And therefore they leave within the year, its either 6 months or a year that a doctor lives there. And then they go and are replaced by other doctors and more doctors come in. Already something very interesting was happening. There were very expensive hospitals where you could pay a hell of a lot of money to get an eye operation or they were two jumbo jets flying form Venezuela to Cuba full of poor patients who were taken to Cuba operated upon there and after convalescing there for a few days were flown back to Venezuela. By now some two hundred thousand people have regained eye sight through those operations, and Venezuela and Cuba are now committed to a project in which within ten years they will eradicate all kinds of curable blindness in Latin America. Fifty five percent of the world's blind live in India. You have to imagine what this means. You are theatre workers; you have to



imagine what it means materially, to people, to populations and that among other things will bring you closer to imagining why so much of Latin America is simply up in arms, entire populations are simply up in arms- if this is possible then why not? You know the great slogan that Margaret Thatcher invented- there is no alternative – if this is possible then why not? why not us?

You know India has, India has the world's second largest (*Reading 50: 00*) concentration of technically accomplished personnel after the United States. You have a technical personal more numerous than Germany, France or Britain and now even Russia. I don't know how it compares with china. China may be beating us by now. But for the rest you have it. It is not lack of resources, either resources on the ground or the higher scientific technical resources, it is not a matter of resources, we are not a poor country in that sense. We are a country of poor people. The blindness of that 55 percent of the world's blind in India is easily curable. What is not curable is the blindness of our rulers. That blindness is curable. So that is one sort of thing that happens. The other thing that I want to share with you is this whole sort of world in Latin America which is how to make that transition. How to make that transition. There are two different kinds of thinking that have developed there, one of it became very very famous around the world, the uprising in the Chaipas (*Reading 51: 43*) in Mexico, with which post modernists just ran. Ahhh local indigenous fragmented – you can change the world without taking power – ahhh the terrain of state politics is not the terrain on which what betrayals happen so on and so forth, horizontal structures of resistance, networks, associations etc. and not the vertical one because the vertical one leads up to state power and that is where all the bad faith and all the bureaucracy happens, and that is not the terrain, its from bottle up, the model of the Chaipas and the Zapatistas in Mexico. Ahh then of course there is the much earlier historic type of thing that Cuba represents. Ahh from the past. I will come to that complication also because that is where the gap – the gap is being... getting bridged. Then you have in country after country notably in Bolivia in Ecuador, in Guatemala ahhhh on the base among the landless movement in Brazil, the amnesty - things of that kind, but some countries just completely dominated by that , for some five years in Argentina, much of which still now exists, which is committed precisely to all that –community after community, village after village, in the most remote mountain vastnesses where questions of race, where questions of culture, where questions of gender equality, where every question that exists in our societies, is sought to be addressed as something that must change without which society will not change. But then what you begin to have there is a very different notion, where these groupings – you know we call the indigenous movement as if there is some secretariat in Bolivia which runs the indigenous movement, which in a sort of a sense, is sort of coming into being. But what you have is something like thirty thousand different organizations in a relatively small country, all representing particular indigenous communities, who have very different material conditions of life, who very often speak different languages, who produce different things etc. who often have different belief systems. (*Reading 55:00*) So when we call the indigenous from the outside, it appears that there is that world and then the world of the indigenous. They are actually very diverse. You organise them all separately and there is no one agency which organizes them all – there in fact are local agencies which do that. And then they begin to interact, and there are two ways of dealing with the state power, one – the concentration of this massive people at various points, where governments are overthrown in the street, five presidencies were over thrown in Argentina in one year between 2001 and 2002, in the streets – five presidencies. In Bolivia, three governments. In the streets. By the mass movement, people who just came down from the altiplanos, so on made it impossible for a government to survive. So that is one sort of thing. Immediately the question comes, so what do you put in their place? Let me say very quickly that in Bolivia for example, there was the most powerful miner's movement in the 50s and the 60s – extremely powerful, latin America's most advanced – one of the most advanced working class movements in the world. Which was completely decimated, the closure of those mines, they were killed, there were military coups and so on. And a number of today's peasants including Evo Morales who has become the president, they became peasants, they became petty farmers, but they were sons of those workers from the mines. Morales' father was a mine worker, and then they went up into the mountains, cleared up some streets and started growing something.

SO some of those traditions of creating unions, but now of a different type, because they are in a different kind of circumstance, anyways, the other thing that happens – one is overthrowing government through mass insurrection, the other thing that happens is that you concentrate the combined power of all these communities at the time when a government falls and say “so what are we going to do now?” there is going to be now an election, that is what we are asking for, what are we going to do now with the elections, and Evo Morales actually arises out of that. Not as a head of a political party, but as a head of a conglomeration of all these groupings which come together to create a collective will for the transformation of the state taking hold of that state, mashing the older state, and typically Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador immediately have constituent assemblies writing up a different constitution, according to what



you want, which then makes it possible legally to do all of that, and not only that, if the government changes, the next government is going to be bound by this constitution and if – that violates the constitution, you will hold them responsible. So the day Morales gets elected, he has two inaugurations, one in the capital according to all the ceremonies that we know from countries like ours, and then the traditional capital of Bolivia, where he is given the sacred mandate. And when his vice president is asked, what the sacred mandate is, he sort of says that it is the mandate that good old communities of ours used to give, when a new chief was elected and in our time it looks a lot like socialism. And so on, and he leaves his city saying, I will come back every month and will hold a city assembly, in which you can hold me accountable for doing what I have been doing that month. I shall be there only so long as you want me to be there. Now these are countries in which the historic parties of the left were either decimated, or became redundant, in fact a combination of both, either totally decimated or under conditions of various sorts, decimated but also that new kinds of questions have been posed. You know in one of my – I did a series of articles in front line, and in one of them I talked about – a series of articles on the twentieth century, and in one of them, I said this is been the century of the rise of democratic demand, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, and what I mean by that is that starting in the middle of the 19th century, Marxism identifies a fundamental revolutionary agent – which is the industrial working class. We can go into all of that how much of the industrial working class there was in 1848, so on and so forth, but has happened I think is that the revolutionary imagination, unleashed by those struggles, unleashed by the revolutions that came by, actually universalised certain kind of imagination of liberation. And the 20th century produced an immense number of revolutionary agents. That's what you are – I mean, cultural workers who are engaged, theatre activists who are engaged in the kind of theatre activity you are doing are a product of that – this democratic demand which says not just the – that kind of theatre, in that number of cities but theatre in these other ways, which speaks to these other classes etc etc. the emergence of women in the late 20th century as a major revolutionary agent that – rise questions of cast, questions of indigenous people, questions of race, rights of the old, handicapped, etc etc. SO, what began to happen at the end of the twentieth century on the one hand historic defeat of the socialist revolutions, but the – then this immense global rise – everybody wants to make their own revolution. This never happened before, now virtually everybody wants to make a revolution of one sort or the other. And the great problem for what Chavez calls the Socialism of the twenty –first century, I am dying to go in October, I have been invited to this grand assembly, global assembly in which one is supposed to think about what socialism of the twenty-first century is going to look like. Ahh what that phrase means is how do you make a revolution; which includes all of these revolutionary agents, in which nobody makes a revolution at the expense of somebody else. How do you accumulate all of this together? Now this is something very different – from either that post modernist notion of fragmentation and local and this and that and so on, or the historic notion of simply a vanguard party capturing power, seizure of power frontally and all that is revolutionary coming after that through the transformation that such a party is going to bring about. It is not about fragmentation, it is about creating those communities of resistance at the base, all kinds of resistance, and obviously cultural resistance at the base, bringing them together, abolishing an indeed re constituting a very different relationship between the local and the universal, between the horizontal and the vertical, between what is now called the civil society, and the state and you work to take state power in this completely different notion of democratic struggle. A revolutionary notion of democratic struggle – not political parties, Manmohan Singh vs Vajpayee what ever this democracy is supposed to be. Ahh!! This – and that is what is at stake in Latin America today, and what the American quagmire in Iraq has done among other things is to give them that bit of a breathing space. American troupes are not in Venezuela because they are in Iraq. Very simple, they cant be everywhere, they found out in Iraq, when they went into Iraq, they thought they could be everywhere, ahmm now except the most rabid, McCain, god knows what he will do, he will certainly speed up the fall of the American empire, because he will send armies to more than one place, ahh that limitation, so what is actually happening is this is the urgency of now, precisely at the time when imperialism is most aggressive, because it is so crisis ridden and crisis itself is leading it to become more and more aggressive, because – without those aggressions it cant even hope to resolve those crisis, that moment is conjoined with the moment, when a completely different kind of revolutionary form involving enormous humanity on the march have come together in the same historical moment. That by and large I think is what I mean by the fierce Urgency of Now. Philosophically of course, only the now is urgent. Nothing else can be urgent.

Thank you very much. (claps)

