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Transcript of the conversation between Professor Noam Chomsky & Mr Ken Loach

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Ken Loach: Thank you very much, I'm very happy to be here this evening - a bit daunted!

Noam Chomsky: I'm very pleased to be with Ken.

Piccolo America: We would like to give Prof. Chomsky and Mr Loach a big round of applause from the whole staff of the Cinema Troisi. Prof. Chomsky and Mr Loach, we can all hear you and see you, and this is already a big result! Huge thanks from somebody who's allowing us Cinema America to host this beautiful event, Damiano, who's on his set at the moment. He is the one who made it possible to get in touch with Mr Chomsky and Mr Loach.

Asia Leofreddi, here, is a sociologist and an activist for social and civil rights. I would like to ask her to introduce the first question to our guests. Thank you, Asia.

So here it is. Last night, Ken Loach gave us an interesting idea: it would be nice, he said, to open the dialogue not with complex issues but from a simple question, because as he said, it is from a detail that bigger stories start. So the question that he suggested we should ask is: what is your first thought when you get up in the morning?

Noam Chomsky: (laughs) Do you wanna try it, Ken?

Ken Loach: (laughs) Well, I'm late. I'll look at the clock and know I am late. I'll hang on till the first cup of coffee and then after that I'm just about functioning. But the anxiety of being late is my first thought. And the second thought is putting on the radio. Why, I don't know. I listen to the BBC, and what strikes me every morning—in a way it gives me the energy to join the battle again—is that the BBC is the most sophisticated propagandist for the state, for the establishment, for big businesses, because it presents itself as totally independent, and yet its agenda is exactly what the wealthy and the privileged want to discuss. I think that is quite

a British characteristic, I am afraid to say—that calculated hypocrisy. The most polite, gentle façade, hides the greatest propagandists of the entire world. So first of all it is being late, and then saving energy to keep up the struggle as far as we can.

Noam Chomsky: I have to say, different choices, but pretty similar responses. The first thing I do when I get up is rush to the door to greet the lovely animals that are at my feet and can recognize a few words, so I paraphrase it. First thing I have to do is try to extricate the canines so that they can race around a little. After that is finished, since we don't have the BBC here, and I can't hear very well anyway, I turn to our equivalent, the New York Times—the first thing I look at in the morning. It's very much like Loach has just described. It is probably the best single source for having a sense of part of what's going on in the world. Very good reporters, often do quite honest, courageous work on the ground, but as it gets reshaped, redesigned, put within the appropriate framework, it becomes a form of apologetics for concentrated power—state and private, always linked of course—on which issues they have chosen and the ones that can not be discussed. Okay...We are being censored.

Ken Loach: (laughs) I think the technology might have broken down.

Noam Chomsky: Yeah, well, actually I live in a suburb of Tucson which is kind of Third World, so the Internet is on and off, and if you live downtown in the business section the Internet is fine, but the further you get from the business section, the worse the Internet is. We were able to have dealings with China to put in the advanced Internet and systems, but we are not allowed to do that. It's almost as bad as accepting Chinese technology to overcome the environmental crisis that would be a catastrophe, to make sure that they don't move ahead developing things that we don't bother with. That is pretty amazing. It's one of those many things that can barely be discussed here.

Ken Loach: Yes. You are looking worried.

Noam Chomsky: We are being censored because of what we are talking about. My early mornings are very much like Ken's. I happen to be in a time zone which is basically the California time zone, which means that in the last couple of years everything has become virtual, so the requests for interviews, talks, meetings, classes all over Asia and Europe, are all very early in the morning here, so that the mornings are packed pretty fully with those. And then, as Ken said, get back to the struggle, which is endless.

Ken Loach: It is, it is, it is!!

Piccolo America: Perhaps Maestro Loach would like to add something else.

Ken Loach: Hmmm, that's... Hmmm... I think we wake up dealing with propaganda from hostile forces, and then that gives you the energy for the day.

Noam Chomsky: Well, the next thing to do, after looking at the mainstream propaganda system, is to search elsewhere in the world and elsewhere in the range of options that technically the Internet does give you access to. There you find out quite a lot that never made it through the doctrinal filters here and is sometimes very striking. I'll just give you one example, almost random, which happened to grab me. We are now reaching the 20th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq by the United States and Great Britain—a lot of talk about it but nothing very serious. Yet there are some things of interest I didn't read in the American press—I picked it up in Al-Jazeera, I looked into it and it is quite interesting. It turns out that the US Navy has just commissioned its most recent assault vessel and named it the U.S.S. Fallujah: it is named after one of the worst atrocities carried out by the US forces in Iraq, frankly: destroying what was once a beautiful city, killing thousands of people using white phosphorus and depleted uranium, and leaving to this day cancer victims, miscarriages and so on. And the report in Al-Jazeera also included an Iraqi journalist, and I think you don't hear in the United States a very eloquent account of what happened to the lovely city in which he had once lived, and how the Empire, twenty years later, is still attacking, destroying the population by the residue of the hideous weapons that they have unleashed, and it's a massacre and destruction. Well, you don't get a headline about it here, or even a footnote; in fact I doubt it has even been mentioned, though you can read it... if you look up the Internet you can read the U.S. Navy statements about how we have to honor all the great achievement of the Marines, which goes down and, for the record, back to the Triple A wars in the 18th century, and now another great triumph that destroyed Fallujah. It is quite common for countries to deny their crimes, but it is a little unusual to celebrate them. So, apparently there's some recognition that it wouldn't be too nice to emphasize the celebration; at least, there hasn't been any report of it.

Ken Loach: It's an extraordinary story, a really extraordinary story, and it sort of indicates how well the USA, America, has hidden that crime—that they feel that they can name a ship and not be held to account for what they did. It is an extraordinary story!

Noam Chomsky: One of the most important developments that took place in the last couple of years was the destruction of the pipeline, the Northstream pipeline, that linked Germany and Russia, basically. They are kind of the basis for the German-based industrial development in Europe, which has been a highly successful enterprise. The destruction of the pipeline was obviously designed to undermine that by removing the cheap source of energy that fueled that development, and also trying to break the very natural commercial relations between Europe and its resource space in the East on the great China market. Well, around the world—if you read the media around the world, it has always just been taken for granted, without any discussion, that of course the US sabotaged it. There is nobody else

that has the capability and the motive, and in fact, US officials were ecstatic about it when it was going up. But you can't say that in the US! Finally—I don't know how well this was reported in England—Seymour Hersh, a fine journalist, did a carefully investigated report in which he discussed in some detail how the sabotage was carried out—it was quite a sophisticated, complicated operation. They said 'it can't be certain,' etcetera. It wholly blanked out: not a comment on it. The only reporting you see is, 'we are now not so confident as before that Russia blew it up.' Now, that is clever propaganda. Of course, they don't open the question that we did—that is unspeakable, those are not even sentences in the English language! They try to turn the attention somewhere else. Now this is sometimes called the 'thief, thief!' technique: if you are caught with your hands in somebody's pocket, don't deny there is a robbery going on, you'd be reshooted; but point somewhere else and say, 'thief, thief!', and maybe someone is going to run over there. So now the line is, 'we are no longer certain that the Russians did it.' The idea is that the Russians could have sabotaged their major capital investment. But that is outlandish: why on earth would they sabotage it? When they wanted the oil to flow, they turned a valve. Yet we say, 'well, we are no longer certain that they did.' So, let's discuss the question whether or not they did it. Let's look over there, not where I am. So, no reporting. But then there was a reaction: a story was leaked out from US intelligence, saying we now have a new lead: a couple of Ukrainians on a sailboat went to Amsterdam, or some place, and they may have done it. I mean, it's like saying that you and I did it! They have about the same capacity on a small sailboat somewhere. But let's look at that: that almost certainly happened, but you can't discuss it. This is—everywhere you look, you find case after case like this. Actually, in England there is a great group, Media Lens, which is constantly exposing these fraudulent, deceitful activities. In the US there is a comparable group, called Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting. But these are pretty marginal—you look for it if you are interested, but it does not reach the public.

Ken Loach: Did you have a next question to put to us, or do you want us to keep talking?

Noam Chomsky: Ask them.

Piccolo America: Yes, we do have questions. We just saw the film, 'Sorry we missed you,' and we would like to reflect on that. This has to do with something you said before about the propaganda of power systems. In the film there is a dialogue between Ricky and his employer, who speaks in a very surgical way, he does not say 'layoff' but 'hire,' he does not say 'wages' but 'tariffs,' and he says, 'it's up to you, it's your choice.' So, in this system where truth is denied, what are the words passed off as meaning something but that in fact mean something different? I am thinking of the word 'resilience,' that hides something else behind its proper meaning.

Ken Loach: It's a very good point you make. Think of a word like 'flexibility:' it sounds good, it means you should be able to adapt, that work is not set. Yet what it really means is that

the employer can get you to work 4 hours one day, 8 hours the next day, maybe no hours and no money at all next week. It means that your pay is linked to the number of hours you do, but you don't control the number of hours, so you could be in poverty or you could get a decent wage, but that is not up to the worker, it's up to the employer. Also, flexibility means you have to work at home if he chooses to, or you have to go in to work if he chooses to. Another word is 'modernization.' Everybody wants to be modern. But 'modern' often means losing all of your rights to work, because modernization for the employer means spending less on labor. For example, at the moment we have an issue for example in the railways, where we have a big strike that has been going on for a long time, 2-3 days here and there. Those strikes were conducted by the railway union, and because they are fighting changes, they are being accused of being against modernization. For the railway employees, modernization also means closing down the ticket offices, so you can't go to the station and buy a ticket: you have to do it on your phone, or on an app. Old people like me can't do that, so they have to go and ask someone to help. And that's modernization. I'm sure Noam has many more words than me on this, but I think the interesting thing, moving on to another related point, is that the strike on the railways is very sharp; railways workers' wages have been cut and they kept the strike going for many months now, and it's about wages, it's about conditions, it's about cutting the number of workers, so it's about all of those things, and this is the interesting point I want to make: the railway union has a policy of taking the railway back into public ownership. Now, the railway workers' leader has led the strike very well, he's a very good communicator, but he's made the point that this is not a political strike. And he isn't announcing the policy of the union that would solve these problems, which is public ownership, a service for the people, security for the workforce. So here is the problem we have: how to develop an industrial struggle against casualized work, against the gig economy, hence a political struggle that will change the structure that gives rise to the gig economy. And that's the big question we have, and maybe, you know, just how to make that transfer from industrial demands to political demands, because unless we make them into political demands, we shall have to fight the same battle this year, next year, and the year after.

Noam Chomsky: What you've just described, let us start with the notion of flexibility and what is called the precariat, the precarious economy, the gig economy, where people, as you say, don't know if they will be called tomorrow to have a job, to work overtime, or maybe not at all. That has led to a situation where people look forward to having any regular job, a job with fixed hours, where you know what's coming. That's quite interesting: the aspiration today is to be a servant to a master for almost your entire waking life. That's what it means to have a job: to have a job means somebody is telling you what clothes you can wear, if are you allowed to go to the restroom at 3 o'clock, and if can you spend a minute to have a cup of coffee. If you're in the Amazon warehouse, can you take this path rather than another path? If you're a driver at a parcel service, and you stop to have a cup of coffee, you get a notice saying, 'do that again and you're going to lose your job.' That's having a regular job,

that is the aspiration in life. You just have to go back, and not too far, to see that having this kind of a job was considered the ultimate attack on human rights and human dignity. The idea that you should be subordinated to some master for most of your waking life was considered beyond intolerable. The major unions, back in the late '90s or early 20th century said, 'you can't do this, we don't accept this fundamental attack on our rights, dignity and freedom.' In Italy, during the First World War and then all over the world—in England, Italy and other countries too—there was recognition that the capitalist world order cannot survive any longer, we cannot tolerate it. In Italy there were workers' cooperatives; England moved towards guild socialism, workers taking over industry. In the US, the first labor union, the Knights of Labor, had this slogan: 'Those who work in the mills ought to own them.' The US was an agricultural country then, of radical farmers—Midwest, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma... farmers were organizing to free themselves from control of Northeastern bankers and market managers by themselves, created a cooperative commonwealth. They began to move towards what was the authentic populist movement, not the way the word is used today. And if the US with the Knights of Labor had begun to move toward Lincoln's ideas, that could have led to a very different country. In Italy, too, it could have led to a very different country, but the movement was smashed by violence: Italy moved to the Mussolini period, the black shirts. In the United States there was a massive attack on labor, they were Afro-Americans, immigrants, under the liberal Woodrow Wilson Association. The socialist parties destroyed, the country never really fully recovered. Instead, Italy and England had a different method. England had enough rights that had been won, so that they couldn't impose a Fascist regime directly to crush the aspirations for participatory rule and running societies. That is exactly what you described before: separating the economy and the political system from ordinary life and making it the domain of experts. The economy is none of your business, it will be run by technical experts who call themselves 'scientists.' Economics is a science like physics; the Central Bank will run it and you guys stay away from it, it's none of your business. This was supported even by people like Keynes and others, who said, 'we have technocrats running it, so don't get involved, just pay attention to your own affairs and don't start this business about interfering with how the economy and the political system are run.' Well, it's been a struggle all the way through, up and back. When you get to Thatcher in England, Reagan in the US, then comes a major assault, a major class war, a major escalation class war, designed under the rhetoric of market and so on. But take a look at that: there's nothing to it, it's massive class war meant to subordinate the population, exclude them from the political system, certainly from the economic system, place the power in the hands of concentrated capital on account of dominating the fundamental structure. There is a kind of formal democracy, but it's very limited its restricted areas that maybe cultural war: it is ok to talk about cultural wars, but stay away from the political economy. And it's had an effect; England, the US, Italy have all suffered severely from it. In the US there happens to actually be a measure given by highly respected quasi-governmental research institutions: the Rand Corporation, which works mostly for the Pentagon, and others did an interesting study of what they call the 'transfer of wealth' from

the working class and the middle class, that is the lower 90 percent in income, transferred wealth from them to the top 1 percent over the last 40 years. Their estimate is roughly 50 trillion dollars! That's effective class war, you have to give credit for it. Highway robbery on a massive scale, all sorts of other mechanisms available: England has had its own, Italy has had its own; sometimes it's called 'austerity,' sometimes something else, but it always has the same outcome. Basically, we're very self-conscious of this carefully designed class war. Of course you don't talk about this in the mainstream, you don't talk about going back to flexibility. Look at this amazing triumph of propaganda. Nowadays working people are concerned with whether they can get a regular job or whether they'll have to live in a gig economy. That means going back to before this measure, when the idea of having a regular job was intolerable: why should I subordinate myself to a master for most of my waking life? Well, that's a propaganda achievement of really impressive proportions, and of course it's below the radar, you don't talk about it, you're not supposed to think about it. I guess this is not very far below the surface, and it can break out at any time, and then again change society and our lives very much for the better.

Ken Loach: Are we ready for another question, you think?

Piccolo America: We are here at the Cinema Troisi in Rome. In September we will celebrate the first anniversary of the inauguration of this new cinema, and now we are celebrating the fact that after 10 years we have won the battle for safeguarding and protecting the historical Cinema America in the Trastevere district. We would like to introduce our lawyer who protected us. So, we managed to wage the battle basically because the only capital we had to invest was time, it was our 20 years of life. We did not have an agenda; we did not have relations or contacts. It was all made possible by the City of Rome. We managed to meet Bernardo Bertolucci and somehow we reached you. Now a few days ago in France, which is shaken by protest against the pension reform, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of a movement, said in a public speech: 'We are not here just to assert the right for a pause in our existence; but above all we say the time of our lives, the time that matters, is not just useful time or work time, it is also leisure or free time in which we can love, live and take care of our beloved.' Can free time be considered a right? And how can this be transformed into a political issue?

Ken Loach: Well, I think it is absolutely a political issue. And then we will remember the slogan from, I think, an early dispute in America, 'we want bread and we want roses, too.' In other words, you work for the essentials of life, but you are entitled to a life of dignity and pleasure and leisure and sports and culture and art, and that is a right we have as people, as human beings. It is an industrial demand, it was a demand for the 8-hour day, which of course is gone now, but it was also a demand for culture, for places for music that were owned by the municipality, owned by the people; theatres, concert halls, art galleries, libraries. We had those in our country, and I am sure you did, too, but they are gone: most

libraries are closed; the art venues now operate only if sponsored by big business, by a bank, by a holding company. And the message that is sending is, 'you get culture only if you have a successful capitalist economy to pay for it.' So it is not a right that we have as citizens: it is provided for by the generosity of those employers. And that is how they transmit the ideology that capitalism is a force of nature, it is freedom: capitalism = freedom. But that is the freedom to exploit, the freedom to be out of work, the freedom to sleep on the street or to live in the best hotels if you have enough money. And I think that is how the ideology, the idea of capitalism is generated, and we are persuaded to accept it. But those are absolutely political demands. Now, I am conscious that we have just 10 minutes left, and one question I'm really eager to think about is, where will we find a way forward? Because I think we can all agree that the world is fragmented, we can all agree that the gains we have made over the century have gone in the last half a century, bit by bit by bit; plus we have a planet in which the environment is collapsing. So if we are to move forward we have to have a political platform, and that's what we struggle with. It would be instinctive to think how we can achieve that, and it's hard to better the old American slogan, 'agitate, educate, organize.' I think that agitation and education are fine, but without organization we cannot win. That is the question: how we organize to win. What is the political plan that is available to us?

Noam Chomsky: Let's think about the assault that we've been subjected to for the past 40, 45 years, the neoliberal assault on the general population. How did it begin? How did Thatcher and Reagan or their advisors begin the class war? The first act, in both the US and Great Britain, was to crush the working class organizations. It was understood by whoever was doing the thinking that if you're going to launch a war against the population, you have to eliminate their means of defense. That's elementary strategic thinking: to launch a war, eliminate the defenses of those you're attacking. There are many, but the main bulwark against oppression, violence, exploitation was the working class organizations, the union movements. So they were the first targets of attack, both in England and in the US, and the means used were often illegal: strike breakers and so on. Most of the world opened the doors to the corporate sector, saying, 'you can move in and carry out further attacks to try to undermine this.' What was called the race to pre-modern residue that's harming sound economics, so get rid of them, and then we can have this wonderful economy in which we can steal 50 trillion dollars from you. But that was the first move. Well, now we should listen to it, we should rebuild those organizations. You look back to the labor movement in the days when it was lively and flourishing: it wasn't just concerned with raising wages, it was a way of life. I mean, I can remember this very well from my childhood. I'm old enough to remember vividly the Great Depression. My own family happened to be first-generation immigrants, working class, mostly unemployed at that point in the 1930s, active members and participants in reconstructing the labor movement. Woodrow Wilson had crushed the working class, but the labor movement began to revive in the 1930s with industrial organizing. Yet, the union was far more than that: one central part of the union movement was adult education. The idea was education goes through your lifetime: adult education,

cultural programs, high quality cultural programs. My relatives, many of whom had barely gone to school, were watching and discussing Shakespeare plays, listening to Budapest String Quartet concerts, to lectures given by left-wing academics who worked for the working people—on mathematics and physics, on psychology and psychoanalysis. This was all part of ordinary working class culture. A large part of it organized around the labor movement and of course it had a major political component, trying to compel social-democratic reforms through a very reactionary state. All of this was combined. Well, the first move in the neoliberal assault was to undermine it pretty successfully. Now, as Ken mentioned, a railway strike is ongoing in England. Well, a railway strike was called in the US, too, where the railways desperately needed to try to maximize profit. The point is that you don't have a spare engineer on each train, actually you reduce the number of workers running these huge freight trains. You cut back monitoring of the infrastructure, so it is collapsing. And what happens? Disasters. There was a huge disaster in Ohio recently, where an enormous freight train with just one engineer and one driver ran off the rails and caused a huge chemical spill. The whole region is becoming virtually unlivable. So a strike was called to try to do something to restore minimal functioning of railroads, but it did not get as far as the railway strike in England. It was instantly blocked by the government: the Democratic liberal government said, 'no, you can't have a railroad strike: we will call out the federal forces.' So you can't do that in the US.

Piccolo America: Professor, excuse me for interrupting you, but I know that Ken Loach had a previous engagement. So, Prof. Chomsky, if you're available, maybe we can ask you a few questions coming from the audience. But first we would like to say goodbye to Ken. Are you ok to stay with us, Prof. Chomsky?

Noam Chomsky: Well.

Ken Loach: May I just say, it's very nice to have been with you and it's great to see you, Noam, and keep up the struggle. We need you yet for many more years. So lots of luck and warmest good wishes to you and thanks for all you do. And thanks for asking me to come back. I have just one problem with Cinema America. Can you find another name? Because our industry, the film industry, is dominated by American films and there are many good American films. But to have the cinema designated Cinema America is quite sad, really (laughs). Uh... Maybe find one of the great Italian directors, De Sica or someone? Cinema De Sica would be great. Anyway, thank you for asking me to come, and I hope to see you soon in person. And lovely to see you Noam. And, uh, many thanks again and warmest good wishes. Bye bye. See you again. Bye bye.

Noam Chomsky: Great. See you, Ken.

Piccolo America: Thank you, Maestro.

Ken Loach: All the best. Bye bye. Oh, and by the way, uh, I won't mention the football match of last Thursday. It would be unfair to mention, you know, the score. But we're smiling in England, at least just once! Okay. Bye. Bye.

Piccolo America: You always say that and you run away before we can answer you!

Ken Loach: Of course I do.

Piccolo America: The first time that Mr Loach wrote to us, he asked us why the cinema was called America, and we had to explain. So thank you very much.

Piccolo America: One more thing. We wanted to thank you and Professor Chomsky together, because after the sort of failure we had last time, we were able to get organized again and felt as if you were right here with us. You know, the wished to try again. It was like going up to the mountain and trying again to reach the peak. But thank you for showing us that everything is possible. Maybe we needed to get better organized. Cultural and legal battles must go hand in hand, but what's really important is to get active, all of us, and to leave behind a better world than what we were given. So let me quote somebody who is very dear to me: let us work so that our children and grandchildren have the tools so that they can carry on with the battle that we started.' Thank you very much. Solidarity with everyone.

Piccolo America: Professor Chomsky, you have all of the audience. Here is a question from the audience, actually from a colleague from the university. Thank you for all the work you have done. A round of applause just for this.

Audience: My question is: a few minutes ago we were discussing what you think about first thing in the morning, when you open your eyes. You said you read the New York Times, it is part of your habits to read it. Yet I saw a documentary in which you said that in the New York Times, for example, there is 60 percent of advertising and 40 percent of content. How does one keep up with information without being overwhelmed by advertising and fake news? How do you handle this, and what is your advice for young people?

Noam Chomsky: In the profession there are technical terms—in TV, in the press: 'content' and 'fill.' The content is what is important, the fill is what you put in between the contents. The content is advertising. In the press there is what is called 'the news hold.' After you lay out all the advertising in the next morning's paper, there is some space which is the 'news hold,' and there are the parts you put in the news. In television the content, where the extensive so-called creative work goes, the imagery expenses, is in the advertising. And in between you have a car chase or something to keep the audience watching until you get to the next ad. That is basically the structure of the media. That is very interesting, you know: the business model is declining, because advertising is shifting to the Internet and social media. So what is happening is that the newspapers and television news are reducing. The very serious effect is that local media, that used to be, in the U.S., high-quality—perhaps in

many states, plus in Los Angeles, Detroit, Cleveland and Chicago high-quality newspapers—are disappearing, they are down to basically two newspapers, the Washington Post and the New York Times, which are declining themselves. The same has happened in England—I don't have the close acquaintance I have with the U.S., but when I used to travel regularly (I am not any more), I used to visit England once or twice a year—I used to get invited for discussions on BBC, back in the pre-Thatcher days—very serious discussions. But they gradually began to be reduced through the Thatcher years. I could see it happen. You watched the BBC a couple of times a year and you saw it consistently decline. You don't get involved in discussions any more, it's all absurdity. Well, that is having the effect of reducing the... whatever the news sources were, they had the fundamental flaws which you were talking about before. And to a certain extent, even that is declining. And what about young people? I don't know the situation in England and in Italy, but in the U.S. there have been studies of it, and it turns out that what is called Generation Z—young people that were born since 2000, roughly—they don't read the press, they don't watch TV, it's getting to the point where they don't even bother looking at Facebook. They live on TikTok, Instagram, that is where they are getting their information from. It's a radical decline of what was once a limited, but existing, media culture. That is pretty serious, I mean, the Internet in principle gives very broad access.

Piccolo America: Are there any more questions from the audience? Are you done with your answer?

Noam Chomsky: I'm fine. I'll have another 5 minutes, then I have another appointment I have to go to.

Audience: In Italy we are having a huge problem of social conflict. Up to the 1970s, Italy was among the countries characterized by the high quality of social conflict, but now it is really disquieting to see that in France people are protesting against the pension reform so vigorously that the country almost comes to a halt, while here in Italy we keep accepting illiberal reforms without reacting. What do you think is lacking. Is our communication not good enough? Mr Loach was saying that Jeremy Corbyn could be a German candidate for the Christian Democrats. So what is lacking in Italy to prevent us from reacting?

Noam Chomsky: Let's take the lack of Left parties, which of course used to exist in Italy—very lively Left parties, as you mentioned. Let's take England. In England there was something called the Labour Party: it was once a labourers' party, a party of working people. The Neoliberal assault began with an attack on the basis for the Labour Party—the trade unions, their organization basis. Take a look at what happened a couple of years ago. In 2015, less than 10 years ago, Jeremy Corbyn was able to take control of the Labour Party and carried out a major crime: he tried to turn the Labour Party into a participatory party of working people which was concerned with the interests and the needs of working people, of the

poor and the marginalized people in the country—the great majority. That was very successful. In 2017 his Labour Party won enormous electoral success, greater than the Party had achieved in 70 or 80 years. The whole of the British establishment, right to what is called Left, organized to try to crush it. The press, from the right-wing press over to the Guardian, organized constant, brutal attacks against Corbyn and what he was doing. The method they used, which was to accuse him of anti-Semitism—always an effective weapon—and all kinds of ludicrous charges of... What it meant was that Corbyn had once said something supportive of the Palestinian people and he was an anti-Semite. A huge attack across the board, all based on lies, deceit, fabrication, was exposed, totally exposed. Al-Jazeera had a long 4-part series in which they exposed the fraud in detail. Even within England there was a review commission of the Labour Party which basically, more quietly said, ‘there is nothing to this: all silenced, no discussion, no talk about it, we have got to eliminate this heresy, we cannot allow the development of an independent organization in which working people will participate, will make the programs, and the programs will be designed for the benefit of a large part of the population: that is unacceptable.’ And as I say, the whole establishment moved to crush it. Something similar happened in the US with Bernie Sanders. He was actually the most popular political figure in the country if you look at polls, but the Democratic Party management managed to marginalize and undercut it. The press literally condemned him. He survived, unlike Corbyn—Corbyn was thrown out of the Labour Party. Sanders survived, he still has got a movement, but again, it was the same thing: ‘can’t allow this to happen.’ Well, that teaches us a lesson. What power systems say cannot be allowed to happen is exactly what we should be trying to create. They are giving us a message, saying, ‘this is what you should be doing,’ and the message is so strong that they are saying, ‘when you try to do it, we will pull out all the means to crush you.’ Good, let’s struggle, let’s recognize what is happening: there is a harsh, brutal class war that goes on all the time, but it’s been quite extreme in the last 30 years, and if it is one-sided, the population loses, if you join in, it’ll win. There have been victories before, there can be again. I mentioned the struggles of the Italian working class movements after the First World War: they were quite significant and they required the establishment of a Fascist regime to crush and subdue them. Well, that can be picked up again: victories could come again, and they had better do, because we are facing crises of an enormous significance and scale and it is going to take the organized, informed, dedicated population committed to working in common to overcome this crisis of oppression and violence within, destruction of the environment, even war without—they are all connected. That is the task you confront, and it is a struggle that can be won. But not unless there is engagement and dedication to it. I had better take off, I have another appointment waiting. It’s good to be with you, I wish you luck in meeting the major tasks ahead. (applause)

Piccolo America: Thank you, Prof. Chomsky. I would like to thank all the people who have made this possible. A big hand for our staff, the technicians, the interpreters. A big applause to resistance!