

## Excerpts from An Interview with Bob Avakian

# What Humanity Needs Revolution, and the New Synthesis of Communism

*At the beginning of 2012, an in-depth interview with Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, was conducted over a period of several days by A. Brooks, a younger-generation revolutionary who has been inspired by the leadership and body of work of Bob Avakian and the new synthesis of communism this has brought forward. Brooks is the author of "God The Original Fascist" (a series of articles which appeared in Revolution in 2005, and is available at revcom.us). From the outset and through the course of this interview, Brooks posed probing questions, dealing with a wide range of subjects, including: the challenges of building a movement for revolution in a powerful imperialist country like the U.S., and initiating a new stage of communist revolution in a world marked by profound inequalities and antagonisms, and repeated upheavals, but also the weakness of communist forces at this time; the content of the new synthesis of communism, its vision of a radically different and emancipating society and world, and how this applies to many different spheres of society and social life,*

*such as art and culture and intellectual inquiry and ferment; previous historical experience of the revolutionary and communist movements; and the personal experience, as well as broader social experience, which led Avakian to become a communist and contributed to his development as a communist leader. The fact that Avakian did not know in advance what the questions would be, and that many of them came up through the course of the interview itself, adds to the liveliness of the interview and the living sense of the method with which Avakian digs into, examines from many angles, and "breaks down" the kinds of far-reaching and often complex questions which were posed in this interview and which have to be grappled with in confronting the challenges of radically transforming the world through communist revolution. The following are excerpts from the interview. In preparing this for publication, while maintaining its integrity and character as an interview, some minor editing of the text was done by Bob Avakian for purposes of clarity, and subheads were added. The full interview, including endnotes, is online at revcom.us.*

### *Rising Up and Searching for a Solution... Fight the Power, and Transform the People, for Revolution*

**A. Brooks:** *I actually wanted to start by referencing a Tupac lyric, because I think that this lyric, whatever Tupac's specific intent was, speaks to sentiments that weigh on a lot of people, including a lot of the oppressed masses. He has this lyric in one of his songs: "We gotta fight back, that's what Huey said—two shots in the dark, now Huey's dead." Obviously, as you have pointed out before, by the time Huey Newton was murdered he had not been a revolutionary for some time, and I don't know exactly what Tupac was trying to get at, but I do think there's something in there that speaks to a lot of things that weigh on people. Both the sense of: if we do try to fight back, much less make revolution, the people who run this country are just too powerful; or, there was this whole upsurge of revolution in the 1960s and then it was just crushed; or, if leaders come forward, they'll just be taken from the people in one form or another—a lot of things that you've spoken to before. And I'm just wondering—obviously, you're somebody who came up through this revolutionary upsurge of the '60s, and not only did not give up but did the opposite and went deeper—so I'm wondering if you could speak to what's captured in that line from Tupac.*

**BA:** First of all, it is essential that people do rise up and fight back. We have a slogan in the Revolutionary Communist Party: "Fight the Power, and Transform the People, for Revolution." And all three parts of that—"Fight the Power"; "Transform the People"; and "for Revolution"—are very important, and they're all interwoven together, it is all one whole. If people don't rise up to fight back against their own oppression, as well as other oppression and injustices in society, and outrages in the world as a whole, then there is no chance that they will ever get free, and that the oppression will ever be ended. Also, if they don't rise up to fight back, there's no way they're go-

ing to be able to raise their heads and begin to really think about and wrestle with the big questions: Why are things the way they are? What is the source of all this oppression and madness in the world? What is the solution to it? And if people don't raise their sights and raise their heads to think about, and to grapple with, those big questions, then they also will never get free.

Further, to go on with "Fight the Power, and Transform the People...": if people rise up—first of all let me step back a second; if they don't rise up, it is much more difficult for them to be transformed, to transform themselves, that is, to see and understand the world in a different way than they do because of the pressures of everyday life and because of the constant bombardment of people through the media and in a thousand other ways—bombardment with the ideas and the outlook of the ruling exploiting class, the capitalists, the imperialists, who rule this society and who control all the major media, as well as the educational system and everything else. Which is not to say there's nobody in the media, nobody in the arts, nobody in education who tries to bring some truth to people—but, let's face it, they're greatly outweighed by the massive weight of the propaganda and miseducation that constantly flows forth from the dominant institutions and the ruling class which controls those dominant institutions. So, if people don't rise up, if they don't fight back, they also are not gonna be able to transform themselves, as well as not being able to transform their conditions, their circumstances, the situation in which they find themselves.

And, on the positive side, by rising up and by raising their heads in the way I was just talking about, the conditions become much more favorable for them to begin to see the world in a different way—to transform themselves, in terms of their understanding, and in terms of their feelings—in terms of their orientation toward society, toward the world,

toward other people, and what kind of relations there should be among people.

We see this all the time, whenever there is some kind of massive uprising and upsurge—whether it's more recent things, like the "Occupy" movement, or going back to what you were referring to, the great radical movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, through which I, and many, many other people came forward—we see this happening over and over again. But then the key question is: for what? And that's why it's "Fight the Power, and Transform the People"—**for Revolution**. Because, if you don't really get to the root of the problem, which lies in the system, all these things that people rebel against, at first spontaneously, and just sort of as a direct response—either to something that's weighing on them and oppressing them, or brutalizing them, or to some injustice that they see that they find intolerable—when people first rise up, they don't see the source of all this, they don't see how it's all rooted in the same system. They don't see, therefore, what the solution could be—that you need to sweep away this system and bring into being a whole other system that can lead to the eradication, the elimination, of all these relations of exploitation and oppression and the way in which the environment is being despoiled to the point of real emergency for humanity, and indeed for life on the earth, for many other species and interconnected webs of species.

### *Getting to the Root of the Problem, and the Role of Leadership*

**BA:** An analogy has been made many times—and perhaps it's been overused, but it's still, I think, a very relevant analogy—to a sickness. People who are sick know what at least many of their symptoms are. They know how they feel. They know that they don't feel well. And, if you wanna get rid of that sickness, understanding what the symptoms are is an important part of it. But that won't do it, in

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