



From the Revolution Talk by Bob Avakian

A Better World Is Possible

Ideas develop and are applied in relation to the material and social conditions people face, the ways in which people interact with each other and with nature. So for capitalism, and every system based on exploitation and oppression, the only kinds of ideas it can produce and the kinds of ideas it promotes as the ruling ideas, are, not surprisingly, ideas that justify all this exploitation and oppression, that teach people that this is the natural order of things and that encourage people to try to become big dogs in this dog-eat-dog world. If this kind of world, this kind of system, if this were all that is possible, that would be one thing. And you see people, even those who are brutally oppressed under this system, as long as they believe this is the only kind of world that is possible, you see them going along with this all the time. I gotta get mine. I gotta get what I can get within this. It's time to get yours.

This reminds me of the story of the prisons in California and in particular what was called the Corcoran SHU, where the guards there would take prisoners and they'd tell them stories about each other, get them angered at each other, and they literally put them in pens, like in the old Roman coliseum—and they'd let them out of the pens and they'd come in and start fighting with each other, sometimes to the death. And the guards would be standing above watching all this, laughing, and betting on the outcome, and if it got out of hand, they'd shoot one or more of the prisoners. This was a whole scandal that finally broke into the open in the California prisons.

Well, if you just look from inside there and here you are, and the door opens and you went out into this arena and you start throwing hands and everything else you can with the other person who's there, you might say, I'm a bad motherfucker. I'm handling this situation. But if you back the camera up a little bit, and look at the larger picture—what's happening? You're being handled. You're being put in this horrible situation by the people standing above you, laughing, betting and ready to kill you if they see it in their interests. And that's a miniature picture, a microcosm as they say of what the world is like today and the way that people get caught up in going along with this. You hear these people say, "I'm on this corner selling my product—I'm regulating the corner." You ain't regulating shit. You're just being regulated. You're just being put there and allowed to be there as long as what you're doing serves the people who really regulate things, who really run this system, for as long as it serves them or doesn't get in their way.

You hear people say—sometimes they get caught up in all this stuff about the hood—"This is our hood. Can't nobody come in here and take over our hood." This is not your hood. You don't own this. You don't run it and you don't control it. The people who

own it and run it and control it are just using you. They're just letting you be played like this and carry on with all this foolishness and dangerous stuff, killing each other off, because it serves their interests, while they're keeping you in these miserable conditions not really different than the prisoners in the Corcoran SHU. It makes me think of a situation where you walk into a scene where there's a man, got a gun in one hand and a big club in the other, and he's got everybody lined up and he goes down the line breaking everybody's legs. And somebody jumps up and says, "All right then, I'm going to be the baddest broke-leg motherfucker there is." Something's wrong here. What we need to be doing is saying, hey, that man's breaking everybody's legs; let's get together and stop that motherfucker from breaking everybody's legs.

Now I understand how people try to make the best of their circumstances. They say, you didn't give me nothing else; you didn't leave me nothing else, so I'm gonna take this and at least this way I can get some respect before I go out. So we can understand this, but again, let's step back and look at the larger picture and the larger world. Because we, the masses of people, are capable of much greater things than this. We are capable of completely and radically changing our circumstances, changing all of society to get rid of circumstances like these. What happens in the world affects us, and we can affect the world. And when all is said and done, we can change the whole world, together with people like us all over the world.

So to sum up the basic point, to step back and look at the sweep of history, since the time thousands of years ago when people began to accumulate surpluses—by surplus I mean an amount beyond what they needed for their mere survival—when they began to accumulate surpluses, and especially once groups of people settled down, domesticated animals like cattle, oxen and horses, and began developing agriculture and things like the mining of metals. Since that has happened, the way society has been is that a few have benefited at the expense of the many. Small groups have controlled and dominated the wealth and power and the means to create wealth and exercise power through exploiting and oppressing the great majority. And not just wealth and power. In the same way they have exercised the activity of their minds, on the basis of forcing others to slave with their backs and their hands, they have acquired and monopolized things like science, philosophy, the arts, and so on and have used this to further reinforce their rule. They have promoted

the idea that they deserve to rule, that they are destined to do so because of their superior nature and because this is also the decree and the plan of some imaginary divine being or the will of heaven. This is the way it was in the ancient empires in China and India, in Mexico, Greece and Rome, in Persia and ancient Babylon, in Egypt and other parts of Africa. This is the way it has been throughout history all over the world since that time, and today we have the U.S. empire and Bush and all them.

But the time in history, the situation in human society where things have to be this way—that time is over. The basis already exists to meet the needs of the people throughout the world and to put an end to the vast horrible and completely needless suffering and misery that people are going through, that people all over the world and yes, millions and tens of millions of people within the U.S. itself are forced to endure. There is the basis right now for everyone to have enough food, shelter fit for human beings, and things like medical care to enable them to lead healthy lives. Yet at the same time, forty thousand children die every day in the third world, from starvation and diseases that could easily be prevented or treated while people all over the world, including in the U.S., are in their millions and billions denied the means to a decent life that should be possible for all. No longer is it necessary for things to be this way. The basis exists for the first time in history to bring into being a whole different way that people understand and change the world, a whole new way they live and relate to each other, a world where, grounded in an abundance of material things to be shared by all and grounded in a scientific approach to understanding reality, grounded in that, people will voluntarily and consciously cooperate with each other to continue expanding the common store of abundance for all and the common store of humanity's knowledge, and where at the same time, individuals' imagination and their creative energies will be continually and increasingly given space and given flight. A new and better world is possible and with all the painful labor and pangs of birth that is involved, a new world is in birth. We need revolution. We need a whole new society, a radically different world. And this is not only possible, it is what the world is straining toward. It is what cries out to be done.

REVOLUTION

The text here is excerpted from "A better world is possible," which is a part of the Session 2 of a film of a talk by Bob Avakian, "Revolution: Why It's Necessary, Why It's Possible, What It's All About." The DVD can be ordered from RCP Publications, Box 3486, Merchandise Mart, Chicago, IL 60654 for \$20 plus \$3 shipping.

The entire talk (and Q&A session) can be seen online at <http://www.revolutiontalk.net/films> (this excerpt can be found an hour and five minutes into Session 2).