

Jeffrey Sachs asks, “Will the rich act to help save the poor?” To which I respond: “We don’t need a world of rich and poor, of exploiters and exploited...we need a radically different world.”

I invite members of the Columbia community to a talk I will be giving on April 8 at 7:00 PM at the Altschul Auditorium, International Affairs Building. The talk is titled **“Everything You’ve Been Told About Communism Is Wrong: Capitalism Is A Failure, Revolution Is The Solution.”**

The stakes of the discussion and debate about the truth of communist revolution are very high. The world is a horror for the great majority of humanity—from wars of empire, to looming ecological catastrophe, to the degradation that women face everywhere on the planet. This is a world that cries out for radical change, for revolution.

But people are told: “don’t go there...anything that challenges the fundamental framework and mindset of capitalism will only lead to disaster.” People are bombarded with the message that communism is a “false utopia that can only turn into a nightmare.”

On my national campus speaking tour, I am challenging and, with facts and analysis, refuting this “conventional wisdom.” I am showing that people have been systematically lied to about the actual history and real promise of communism.

I address this letter to Jeffrey Sachs of the Earth Institute at Columbia because he is an influential advocate of an illusory “humane capitalism”: where “micro-loans” empower women to escape poverty...where transnational pharmaceutical and energy companies can provide the magic technological bullets to solve health and environmental problems...where institutions like the UN and World Bank become necessary instruments for social advance.

In short, Jeffrey Sachs has built his intellectual vocation on the premise that this world of vast suffering and inequality needs **more** capitalism...that is, more of the same cruel, exploitative system. So I also invite Jeffrey Sachs to attend and respond to my April 8 lecture. Indeed, **I am prepared to dispense with my talk altogether and instead hold a public debate with Professor Sachs.** The decision is his.

A CHALLENGE TO JEFFREY SACHS: THREE ISSUES TO DEBATE

1. In your 2005 book *The End of Poverty*, you categorically deny that “Europe and the United States used military force and political strength during and after the era of colonialism to extract wealth from the poorest regions, and thereby to grow rich” (p. 31).

In fact, colonization, pillage, plantation slavery, and the early de-industrialization of the Third World played a decisive role in the rise and spread of Western capitalism. The exploitation of the world’s poor, far from being an unfortunate parenthesis in the economic growth and prosperity of the rich countries, has been a central feature of the workings of the world capitalist system. And the present-day reality of imperialism is one of wars and occupations, geopolitical contests for control over natural resources, and global networks of sweatshops.

2. In *The End of Poverty*, you extol micro-enterprise lending as a ticket out of poverty. But micro-credit has drawn

vulnerable women into the shifting sands of the market and into the grip of financial dependency. Loans must be obtained to repay past loans; loans are used to pay for basic consumption goods; governments look to micro-credit as an excuse to cut social programs. A simple question: how does a poor corn farmer in Mexico using “micro-credit” compete with giant U.S. agro-firms with their “mega-credit”?

You peddle the ideological narcotic that impoverished countries need more philanthropic aid from the West, more Western investment and technology, and more integration into the world market. But such integration did not prevent an unprecedented global food crisis from breaking out in 2008. Indeed, this crisis had everything to do with the workings of capitalist markets and speculation. The number of hungry in the world is now at an historic high of 1 billion.

3. You pose your challenge to a generation: “Will the rich act to help save the poor?” (p. 329).

To which I respond: We don’t need a world of rich and poor, of exploiters and exploited...we need a radically different world. In fact, the wretched of the earth have made revolution and started on the road to communism—first in Russia (1917-1956) and then in China (1949-1976)—and achieved great things before being turned back by the forces of the old order. The poor and oppressed can liberate themselves and all of humanity. And we can go further and do better in the next wave of revolution.

Let’s debate these two visions, these two different worlds, these two different futures.

BECAUSE THIS MATTERS A GREAT DEAL

In my talk, I will show how the received wisdom about communism is built on lies and misrepresentations. And I will not only discuss the past. I will be discussing the new synthesis of communism of Bob Avakian. He has been summing up the great achievements as well as the shortcomings and problems of the first wave of socialist revolutions. Avakian has brought forward **a vision of socialism and communism that is as determined to forge a society in which intellectual, political, and cultural ferment will flourish on a scale unseen in human history... as it is committed to solving the most pressing problems confronting humanity.**

All this matters a great deal. If what I am saying about communism and revolution is right, then everything changes in terms of what is possible for humanity.

To those concerned about the state of the planet...you need to come to my talk and bring your toughest questions.

To those who want a better world but cannot see beyond NGOs, “socially responsible” investment, and the philanthropy of the rich...you absolutely need to come, because a whole other world is possible.

To those who want to defend this system...you need to be there too, because I am taking on all comers.

Everything You’ve Been Told About Communism Is Wrong: Capitalism Is A Failure, Revolution Is The Solution
Thurs. April 8, 7:00 pm, International Affairs Bldg., Altschul Auditorium, 420 W. 118th St.
All students: free or donation. Non-students: \$10.