

**THE COMING
CIVIL WAR**

AND

**REPOLARIZATION
FOR REVOLUTION
IN THE
PRESENT ERA**

BOB AVAKIAN

This is a series of excerpts drawn from conversations and discussions, as well as more formal talks, by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA. As the title indicates, these excerpts address questions of literally world-historical magnitude. There is a deep analysis of the stakes of this moment—and a bold and comprehensive strategy for meeting the challenge and wresting a revolutionary future out of that challenge. Everyone and anyone at all concerned about the current direction of society should dig into this pamphlet.

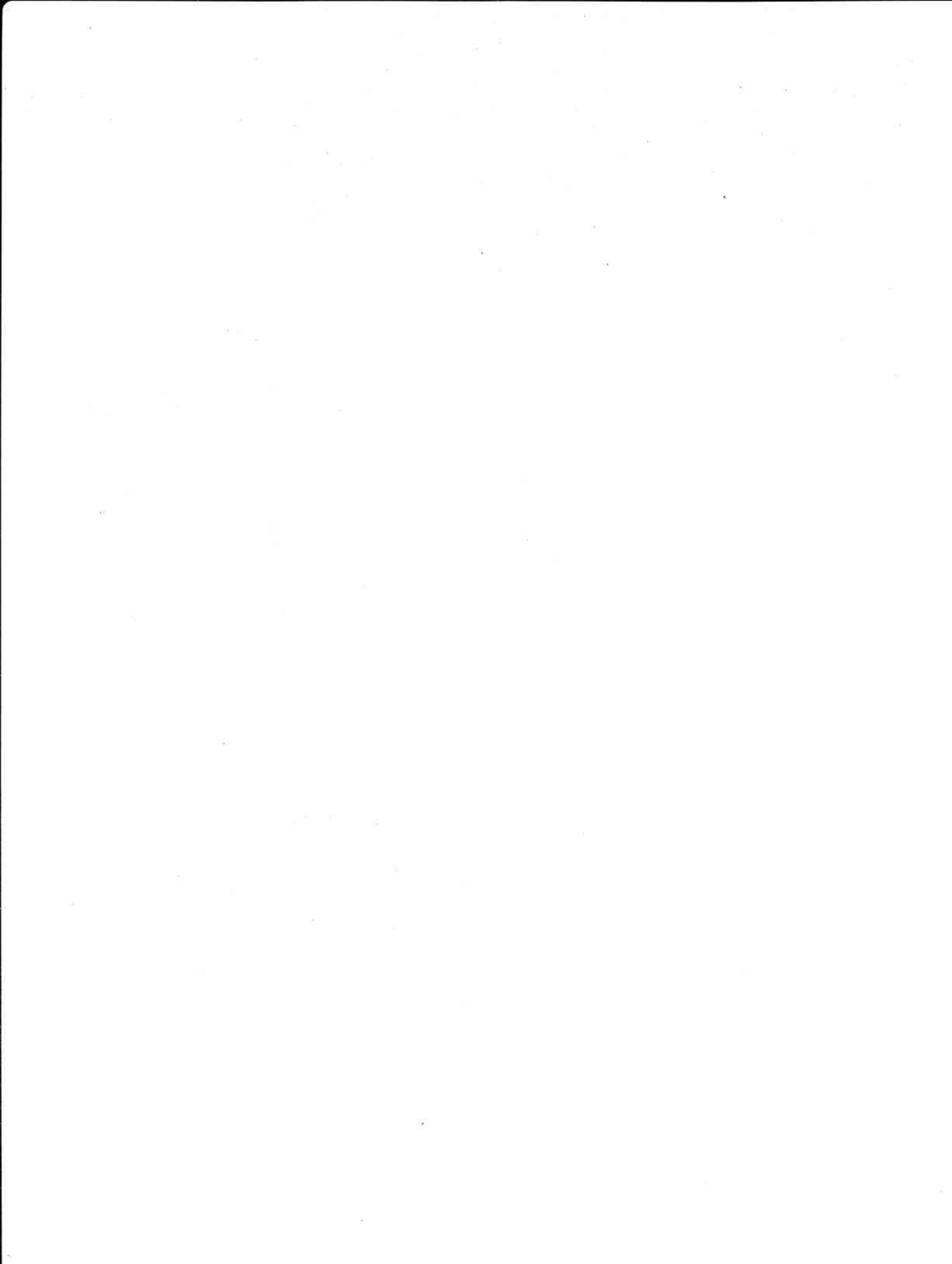
This series originally appeared in the newspaper Revolution, and has been edited for publication; subheads and footnotes have been added.

RCP Publications
P.O. Box 3486, Chicago, IL 60654

©2005 by Bob Avakian. All rights reserved
First edition.
Printed in USA

Table of Contents

Elections, Resistance, and Revolution	
The Pyramid of Power and the Struggle to Turn This Whole Thing Upside Down	1
The Revolutionary Potential of the Masses and the Responsibility of the Vanguard	6
Do the Masses Need Bill Cosby's Scolding or Do They Need Leadership to Put an End to Oppression?	8
The Coming Civil War and Repolarization for Revolution in the Present Era	10
The Danger of the Christian Fascists and the Challenges This Poses	12
Changes in the World and the "Clash of Civilizations"—Within <i>This</i> Civilization	16
The Republi-Fascists...and the Republi-crats And Where Is the <i>Real</i> Alternative?	20
On Mandates...Liars...And the Will of the People	22
The Center—Can It Hold? The Pyramid as Two Ladders	24
A Way To Understand What's Going On: The Two Pats, And Andrew Sullivan...And Cornel West	27
Bush I...Bush II...And Things Going to Extremes	33
There Is No "They"—But There is a Definite Direction to Things The Dynamics Within the Ruling Class, And the Challenges for Revolutionaries	37
Not Being Jerry Rubin, Or Even Dimitrov, But Actually Being Revolutionary Communists: The Challenge of Defending Fundamental Rights—From a Communist Perspective, and No Other	40
The Fascists and the Destruction of the "Weimar Republic"...And What Will Replace It	42
Religion and the Right to Religion Dark Ages Mentality and the Liberating Outlook and Method of Communism	45
Religion and Unity-Struggle-Unity with Progressive Religious Forces	47
The Bible and Baby-Killing The Right to Abortion and the Whole Direction of Society	49
The Foolishness of Confusing Religion With Fundamentalist Fascism	52
Religion, Morality...Polarization, Repolarization Two Solid Cores in Fundamental Opposition	54



Elections, Resistance, and Revolution

THE PYRAMID OF POWER

AND THE STRUGGLE TO TURN THIS WHOLE THING UPSIDE DOWN

Question: Part of your earlier talk was about our involvement with Iraq, the slaughter of the poor Iraqis, and what do you think the odds are [that] for election purposes this current administration will commit another slaughter against another country, one of the “axis of evil” most likely I guess?

Answer by Chairman Avakian: Well, I think it’s possible that they would do that. On one level, they are madmen. But on another level, they aren’t simply madmen; they do try to think strategically and they do have people smarter than Bush, I guess—which isn’t saying very much—who actually try to think things out strategically and think over the longer term. A lot of people thought, “Well as soon as they get through with Iraq, they’re going to attack Iran and North Korea.” But they’re actually proceeding in a little bit more measured way right now because they don’t want to get over-extended and they don’t want to get in over their heads.

North Korea is a real problem for them because, whether or not it has nuclear weapons, it has massed artillery on the border with South Korea; and if they attack it, it can unleash a massive barrage which will kill probably thousands of American soldiers and probably hundreds of thousands of South Koreans. So they have to figure out how to deal with that contradiction. They just can’t jump in with both feet without thinking. And similarly with Iran—to go after Iran is not just a light matter, it’s even more complex and more difficult than going after Iraq, which they weakened through a previous war and then through ten years or more of sanctions. So I think there’s a possibility of another war relatively soon, but they are trying to think strategically, even past the elections.

I actually think one of the main ways in which they are trying to position themselves for the 2004 election, interestingly enough, has to do with the state of California right now. Not that I am a fan of Gray Davis or want

to argue for keeping him in office. On one level, who gives a fuck. But, on the other hand, we do have to look beyond the surface of things to see the larger picture. And I do think this recall is very likely part of a whole thing where these people grouped around Bush are positioning themselves well beyond this immediate situation in California, trying to get control of the state of California as part of going for the 2004 election, and looking beyond that. Bush has gone off and raised—what, 200 million dollars already for the 2004 election? I mean it’s really incredible. And I think one of the things that is very serious to consider, is that these people grouped around Bush—he’s just sort of a figurehead for this group of people who have been at this for quite a while now—they actually consider any other group of people being the government of this society as being completely illegitimate. That’s the way they looked at and treated Clinton—again, he’s no hero of the people by any means, but that’s the way that they looked at him even when he was president. And that’s the way they look at anybody other than themselves as being at the core of power in this society. Whether they go and attack another country, which I wouldn’t rule out, there are some very serious things that are going on in this society now that we have to look at. We can’t be simple minded if we’re going to actually do what needs to be done, especially if we are going to make the kind of revolution we need to make. You have to look at what’s been building in this society for quite a while now.

It’s helpful to look at it kind of like a pyramid. At the top of this pyramid are the people that rule this society and in particular you’ve got those that are represented by the Democratic Party on the one hand and the Republican Party on the other hand. And there is struggle between them. This is very obvious, right. Think back to the 2000 election: that was the most boring election in recent memory, and all of a sudden it turned into an

extremely intense and interesting thing, not because of what they said and did while they were campaigning, but because of the way the election came out (or didn't come out). So then you could see that there is very sharp struggle among them. And if you look at this kind of pyramid thing, on the top of this pyramid is the ruling class and its different political representatives, which (even though it may be a bit oversimplified) we can look at as the Democrats on one side and the Republicans on the other. And for decades now these people who are grouped around Bush and the kind of people that they represent have been working and preparing a whole thing in society—a whole infrastructure you might call it—a whole structure within the society itself that could move this society in a whole different way towards a fascistic kind of thing when things come to that.

Look at this whole religious fundamentalist thing they've got. This is an effort to deliberately build up a base of people, millions and millions and millions of people, who are frightened by the idea of thinking—I'm serious—people who cannot deal with all the "complicatedness," all the complexity of modern society, who want simple absolute answers to the complexities of this society. This whole religious fundamentalist thing is based on mindless absolutism—like that bumper sticker: "god said it, I believe it, and that settles it." And of course, as I spoke to earlier, what "god said" is what these reactionary human authorities tell them god said—not simply what's in the Bible, which after all was written by people, but also what these people alive today say the Bible means. And, as a matter of fact, these "authorities" themselves ignore parts of the Bible that are inconvenient for them to talk about now. For example, they don't really want to go out with a program saying all children who strike their parents, or simply are disrespectful to and rebellious against their parents, should be executed. Because that would expose them for the crazy maniacs that they are. But if you literally believe what's in the Bible, you should uphold that.

Now here's another example of how they get these people to be unthinking stormtroopers. The conscious political operatives, representatives of the ruling class, that have been organizing and "cultivating" these Christian fundamentalist forces, had a real problem because for years and years and years the people in these fundamentalist movements have all been trained with the idea that "the Jews are the killers of Christ." That's how they have been identified—"the Christ killers." This is what you learn if you learn Christian fundamentalist religion: the Jews are the ones who crucified Christ. So, naturally this makes them kind of crazy haters of the Jews. But there is a problem. You see, the people who are on top of this—not the people who are unthinking foot soldiers of this, but the commanders on the top, the Falwells and the

Pat Robertsons and all those people, with their connections right to the highest levels of society and government—their problem is that they are strategic operatives for this imperialist system and for a particular section of the ruling class within it. And for this ruling class and for that section, the state of Israel is tremendously important, strategically, for everything they're trying to do in the world.

So here you have a big contradiction for the Christian fascists: The state of Israel is a Jewish state and they proclaim the Jews to be "Christ killers," and yet you've got to get people in these Christian fundamentalist movements to be unthinkingly supportive of the state of Israel. How do you do that? Well, here is what you do. You tell people that, according to the Book of "Revelation" in the Bible, the creation and existence of the state of Israel is a crucial step in the process leading to the "second coming." So therefore, if Israel is destroyed it will set back the forces of Christ and advance the forces of Satan (or the anti-Christ) in terms of the "second coming." Therefore, the state of Israel has to be defended at all costs, get it? So this is the way they get these people.

Now, again, they've been working on this base of people for decades. They've been organizing and not only creating this whole broad movement, they've also been organizing what you could call cadre formations—political structures and political operatives in things like the "Promise Keepers." The "Promise Keepers" is a fascistic fundamentalist religious organization which not only calls on men to make their wives subordinate to them, and wives to submit to their husbands (lovingly, of course) but it also sets out to organize an actual structure of people who will carry this message and this program into every part of life: into their job, into their kids' little league baseball teams, and all the rest of this. They've been building this up for decades now. So they've got a sort of a fascistic mass movement and an organized cadre they're building within this society, an organized structure of political operatives.

And, while this is very important for them, they've got something even more important. They've got a heavy influence in the command structure of the American military. There is a book, for example, called *Making the Corps*. It's written about the Marine Corps—it covers the basic training of people in the Marine Corps. And one of the things that comes out in that book is how the command structure of the U.S. armed forces is becoming "politicized" (in bourgeois reactionary terms). One of the big principles of the U.S. military has always been that it's not a political army, it's not a politicized force. It doesn't take part in politics, it upholds the chain of command through the Constitution, and it doesn't get involved in politics, and it doesn't have a specific ideological stand. But then, over the last few decades, there's

been an increasing influence of the Christian right-wing fundamentalists among the officer corps of the military. So now it's a highly ideological military officer corps that identifies politically with this extreme right-wing fascistic kind of program and movement in this society.¹

So, let's look at this whole picture and look at what they've been putting in place and then think about this: what do the Democrats—from their own position within the ruling class—what do they have to counter this with?

Here's the pyramid, and here are the Republicans over here (on the right) with their shit going down to this right-wing social base of religious maniacs and fundamentalist fools. OK, remember the aftermath of the 2000 election, when they were dealing with all the "hanging chads" and "pregnant chads" and all the rest of that in Florida. There was one point where in one precinct in Florida they were counting the ballots, and this group of operatives—Republican congressional aides—came down there and banged on the doors of the precinct where they were doing this, and actually intimidated them out of counting the ballots. Now, that was significant in itself but it was also symbolic of something much bigger than that particular incident. What it's symbolic of is that these forces are quite willing to call into motion this fascistic kind of force that they've built up when they feel that they need it, and they're willing to bring it all the way into motion and turn this into a whole other kind of religious, fundamentalist, fascistic society if they feel that's where they need to go.

On the other hand, here are the Democrats at the top of this pyramid (on the so-called "left"). Who are the people that they try to appeal to—not that the Democrats represent their interests, but who are the people that the Democrats try to appeal to at the base, on the other side of this pyramid, so to speak? All the people who stand for progressive kinds of things, all the people who are oppressed in this society. For the Democrats, a big part of their role is to keep all those people confined within the bourgeois, the mainstream, electoral process...and to get them back into it when they have drifted away from—or broken out of—that framework. Because those people at the base are always alienated and angry at what happens with the elections, for the reason I was talking about earlier: they are always betrayed by the Democratic Party, which talks about "the little man" and poor people and the people who are discriminated against, and so on. And at times they'll even use the word oppression. But then they just sell out these people every time—because they don't represent their interests. They represent the interests of the system and of its ruling class. But they have a certain role of always trying to get people who are oppressed, alienated and angry back into the elections. You know: "Come on in, come on in—it's not as bad as you think, you can vote, it's OK." This is one

of the main roles they play. But the thing about them is that they are very afraid of calling into the streets this base of people that they appeal to, to vote for them. The last thing in the world they want to do is to call these masses of people into the streets to protest or to battle against this right-wing force that's being built up.

So, this gives a sense of the real danger that exists now in this country—of the whole direction toward a qualitatively much more repressive and, yes, even a fascistic form of bourgeois rule.

But it's a very sharply contradictory and two-sided thing. We should understand that. On the one hand, things get moved farther and farther to the right, and all the Democrats do is raise a few whiny objections and then find their position at "the left wing" of the juggernaut that's moving farther and farther to the right.

The Democrats always present themselves as the "reasonable center" and as the ones upholding the Constitution and orderly Constitutional rule in society, as it moves further and further in this fascistic kind of direction. But the other side of that, as things are sharpening up in society, is that there are tens of millions of people who hate the direction that things are going in. We've seen this in the aftermath of the election, and we saw it around the Iraq war. And it's not just the Iraq war, although it very definitely is that.

Millions and millions and millions of people have a deep, visceral gut hatred for everything that's represented by Bush and the whole direction that group is taking things. And one of the interesting things that's happened is that, because of the role the Democrats are playing, they're paralyzed to a significant degree from offering any alternative for those very alienated and angry people.

Part of the reason why the demonstrations against the Iraq war were as massive as they were is because people felt they had no choice. The Democrats refused to offer them an alternative. If you think back to the elections in 2002, the congressional elections, it was a perfect time, if a party like the Democrats actually wanted to oppose what the Bush group was doing in its whole move towards war, they could have gotten a massive turnout of people voting for them. People were almost begging the Democrats to take a stand against it, but for all the reasons I've been pointing to, they look at the situation and they say, "Well look, we might not like some of the Bush program either, but if the shit comes down, if everything goes down, and it's a struggle between us and them, they can call all their crazy people out into the street and they can get big sections of the military to go with them. Who's going to go with us—who that we aren't afraid to call out?!"

So, to a significant degree, they're paralyzed, and this is one reason why there was tremendous mass mobilization, particularly against the Iraq war, even before it

began, because people felt the need for something to be done. They were looking for people like the Democratic Party leaders to do something, and they didn't do it, and people felt strongly enough and they said that we have to move on our own, anyway.

This is significant in itself but it also demonstrates a positive potential in terms of revolution. I'm not saying that we are on the threshold of revolution right now, but just looking down the road, and looking at the potential, one of the things that leads to a revolutionary situation is that millions and millions of people feel that something is intolerable. They want certain leaders at the top of society to lead them in doing something about it, but those leaders are not in the position to and don't want to lead them in doing it—so whom do they turn to? The people who are willing and determined to lead them to do it and to take it somewhere. So this is a situation that's full of great danger; but the same situation—or the other side of the contradiction—is that it holds much positive potential for struggle now and for revolution as things unfold.

Think about it—how they run this game with elections. You've got this whole traveling circus out here now of Democratic Party candidates going on this speaking tour around the country. And interestingly enough, there was this thing in *Time* magazine talking about Al Sharpton, and it said that Sharpton is, in essence, an illegitimate candidate—that he has no chance of being president and he has this whole funny past, the Tawana Brawley² case and all this stuff.

But isn't it strange, they said, that when they have these Democratic Party candidate meetings, Sharpton's the one who gets the best response from people, other than this guy Howard Dean, because those are the only ones even pretending to talk about anything that people feel deeply in their guts these days. Whatever the intent of Sharpton, the objective role of people like that—and even more of Howard Dean—has been to get all those people who are alienated and angry, and feel the Democrats have betrayed them, back into the arena: "Come on back because the primaries are coming up—vote for your candidate, there is a place for you." And, then what happens? Your candidate doesn't win, he doesn't get the nomination—but then they have the next step for you. Now they got you leaning that way and they say, "but, do you want Bush again?" OK, so your candidate didn't get in there, so we got Dickhead Gephardt³ as the candidate,³ but, still, it's better than Bush, isn't it?"

Then you are paralyzed because you've been brought back into their arena where you can't do anything effective. This is going to be a tremendous tug and pull on this huge body of people—literally, already, tens of millions of people—who feel this deep gut hatred for what's going on. Are they going to get brought back into

the fold, or are they going to get increasingly brought into resistance?

Now that doesn't mean that the dividing line should be drawn, or can be drawn, over whether you vote or not in the next election. That would be foolish. Many, many, many people are going to vote for the Democrats—people who are also going to know that the Democrats aren't going to do shit—and we have to get out and do something to move these people in a better direction: we have to unite with them in that part of it, in their opposition and deep hatred for the whole direction of things, and bring them forward, because it's going to be proven again and again that these Democrats don't represent any way to stand up and fight against all this. So we have to develop a certain sophistication, a certain maturity, a certain flexibility, a certain all-aroundedness about how we approach these things. A certain dialectics—of recognizing the contradictions and how they are moving and developing—in order to actually build the kind of movement which can have a major impact now and can actually lead toward revolution.

In a world marked by profound class divisions and social inequalities, to talk about "democracy"—without talking about the *class nature* of that democracy and which class it serves—is meaningless, and worse. So long as society is divided into classes, there can be no "democracy for all": one class or another will rule, and it will uphold and promote that kind of democracy which serves its interests and goals. The question is: **which class** will rule and whether its rule, and its system of democracy, will serve the **continuation**, or the eventual **abolition**, of class divisions and the corresponding relations of exploitation, oppression and inequality.

NOTES:

1. Another important part of this overall picture is the fact that, increasingly over the past several decades, the Supreme Court has also come to be dominated by people who "identify politically with this extreme right-wing fascistic kind of program."—Bob Avakian

2. In November 1987, 15-year-old Tawana Brawley was found in upstate New York, semi-conscious and wrapped in a plastic garbage bag. She had been missing for four days. Her blouse was full of burn holes, and the crotch of her pants was burned away. Dog feces was smeared on her, and chunks of her hair were cut off. Racist epithets were scrawled on her stomach. She later said that she was abducted and raped by a group of white men that included law enforcement officials. The Brawley case touched off widespread outrage. But the authorities immediately pointed the finger at Tawana, her advisors, and her supporters. Instead of helping the trauma-

tized young woman, the system persecuted her and attacked those who rallied around her. More than 10 years later, a court ruled against Tawana Brawley's advisors, including Sharpton, in a civil suit brought by a former district attorney—one of the men whom Tawana had accused of assaulting her.

3. Dennis Kucinich also fits into the category of a candidate who was "even pretending to talk about anything that people feel deeply in their guts these days," although from the beginning it was clear that Kucinich, as well as Sharpton, had no chance to win the nomination. And, while Dick Gephardt, cited here as an example of what type would be the eventual Democratic Party candidate, actually fared so poorly in the early going that he had to drop out of the race, the basic point being made here applies: That the Democratic Party nominee will be someone who from the beginning was well within the "acceptable" narrow (and continually moving to the right) framework of mainstream bourgeois politics—or someone who, in any case, had situated himself well within that framework by the time of the general election—and that this is a repeated and well-established pattern and device for drawing in, and then frustrating and betraying, millions of alienated and angry people who are constantly bombarded with the notion that, if you want to change things, there is no real alternative to the Democratic Party.—Bob Avakian

THE REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL OF THE MASSES AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE VANGUARD

One of the things that I see, something that I haven't lost sight of, is this: I see all the strength of the ruling class, but I also see all the way through all this shit, all the contradictions in society—I actually see a force in this society that, if it were developed into a revolutionary people, actually could have a go at it, could have a real chance of making a revolution, or being the backbone force of a revolution, when the conditions were ripe. I see a force of millions and millions and millions—youth and others—for whom this system is a horror: It isn't going to take some cataclysmic crisis for this system to be fucking over them. The ruling class, ironically, sees them too. It is those who have once had but have lost—or those who never had—a revolutionary perspective...it is they who can't see this.

So what I'm working on is all the things that are in between that revolutionary potential and its actual realization. How does this force of masses at the base of society get joined by people from other strata, how does it get allies broadly, how does it get "friendly neutrality" among many in the middle strata—how does all this get developed into a revolutionary people that can become a powerful fighting force when the conditions emerge to fight all out for the seizure of power? How does all that happen *not in a passive sense*, but *how do we work on* bringing this revolutionary people into being, even if most of the changes in society and the world are not owing to our initiative but to larger objective factors? I actually believe there is such a revolutionary force in potential—I actually believe this, I see this potential—I believe that there is a force there that, if somehow (and the bourgeoisie knows this too) if somehow the bourgeoisie got into a real, deep crisis...[*BA laughs*]

Yes, these masses have got a lot of ideological hang-ups, and everything else—that's why we have work to do—but we should never lose sight of that potential. And it's not only the oppressed nationalities either—although

that is a good part of it, it's not the whole of it. There are a lot of youth, and there are a lot of other masses, of all nationalities. They are not a revolutionary people now, and they are not joined by other forces in the way they need to be—they don't have the necessary allies, they don't have the necessary "friendly neutrality," they don't have the political paralysis of the half-hearted reformist trends, and whatever. But that relates to the crucial question of *where we come in*, in relation to all that. Do we just wait for "the stars to all align"? Or do we have a lot we can do—is there a lot of back and forth between us and the objective situation, not just at the point of a revolutionary crisis but all along the way toward that point?

This is why, among other things, I haven't become discouraged with all these twists and turns. Not only do I have the moral dimension of feeling it's an outrage the way that masses of people, tens of millions in the U.S. and literally billions more in the world, are treated, but I'm also thinking about how to bring into being this revolutionary people—not just how are they going to become a revolutionary people in the sense of wanting to make revolution and overthrowing the system, but how are they going to become a revolutionary people in terms of "fitting themselves to rule" as Marx once put it. This is why I don't feel like tailing them—because what good is that doing for them?

I told some people in a discussion recently: If anybody expects that, because I'm a white male, I am going to be apologetic about putting myself forward as a leader, they are going to be terribly disappointed—you are in for a big disappointment if you expect me to be apologetic about that. Because whom are we thinking about when we're thinking that way? And *what* are we thinking about? Are we really thinking about the masses of people who are bitterly oppressed, and what they need to get out from that oppression, and to make a whole different, much better world—or are we thinking about

something else? That's why I don't feel like tailing these masses. There are plenty of people pandering to them and using them in various ways, and feeling sorry for them. I *hate* the way the masses of people suffer, but I don't feel sorry for them. They have the potential to remake the world, and we have to struggle like hell with them to get them to see that and to get them to rise to that. We shouldn't aim for anything less. Why should we think they are capable of anything less?

And, yes, there are a tremendous number of contradictions. I'm not an idealist—I'm not a "soft-headed liberal"—I know that the masses of people have real limitations and shortcomings, as a result of living and struggling to survive under this system. Many of them have been denied not only formal education but access to knowledge about many spheres—and a good number of them have even been denied the means to learn basic things, like how to read—but that doesn't mean they are not capable of overcoming all this. And it doesn't mean that they have not accumulated a great deal of experience and knowledge and wisdom of many kinds, which can contribute to the development of the revolutionary struggle, especially as this is taken up by people wielding a scientific communist outlook and method and spreading *this* among the masses of people. We should understand, on a scientific basis, that these masses are fully capable of becoming conscious communist revolutionaries. Those who have been kept illiterate by this system are capable of being leaders of a revolution and of a new society that will overcome the things that made them illiterate. We should struggle like hell, ideologically and practically, to enable them to become literate; but, even if they don't, they can still play a leading role in the revolution. You want to talk about the non-professional leading the professional? This is how you do it—you do it with ideology, communist ideology and methodology, in the fullest sense. And you do it with *the correct understanding* of this ideology. Some of the masses who are going to play leading roles in this process are never going to understand much beyond some basic things about physics, for example. And most of us here aren't either. [*BA laughs*] But they don't have to understand all that to be able to lead. If you have the right ideology and methodology, you can still relate correctly to physics, and to physicists, and to people in all these spheres. You can still enable the masses to enter into these spheres and learn about them, and learn how to give leadership, in an overall sense politically and ideologically, to people in these spheres—without undermining and undercutting these spheres, without acting in a narrow way, or worse yet a tyrannical way, towards the people who *do* have specialized knowledge and expertise in these spheres, and without limiting and constricting them but, on the contrary, valuing and learning from

them and their knowledge— *and their search for knowledge*—and uniting and struggling in a good way with them. It's tough, we have to work on these problems some more, but there is a methodology here that can lead to correctly dealing with these contradictions, in a way that gives full expression to the scientific method, the scientific spirit and scientific inquiry, to the flowering of the imagination and the search for the truth, and that leads all this to serve the emancipation and the betterment of humanity.

And, at the same time, it is very important to keep in mind that more than a few physicists, and people with expertise in other fields, will themselves become communists and play leading roles, not only in relation to their particular area of expertise but in an overall sense, in making revolution and transforming all of society and bringing a whole new world into being.

Masses of different strata, including the basic masses—we cannot have the idea that they are capable of less than they are capable of. They are capable of terrible things, yes; some do terrible things, too, as a result of what this system has done to them; but that doesn't mean that this is somehow their "essence" and all that they are capable of. Speaking of the broad masses, including some who have gotten caught up in terrible things, they are also capable of *great* things.

It is the responsibility of those who are the vanguard to lead the masses to realize this potential, to become a revolutionary people and, when the time becomes ripe, to be the backbone of a revolution that will open up the way to a whole better world. And, yes, that means struggling with the masses to, first of all, recognize their own revolutionary potential, their potential to become the emancipators of humanity, and then to act in accordance with that potential.

DO THE MASSES NEED BILL COSBY'S SCOLDING OR DO THEY NEED LEADERSHIP TO PUT AN END TO OPPRESSION?

I have seen that some people have expressed surprise, in watching the DVD of my speech on revolution¹, that a white person would say these things about national oppression—exposing and denouncing white supremacy so strongly. But the point is, I'm not a liberal—I'm a *communist*. And communists, if they are really communists, hate national oppression and white supremacy as much or more than anybody, regardless of what nationality you are.

Bill Cosby is as Black as he wants to be, but look at what he is saying! In effect, he is blaming the masses of oppressed people for their own oppression—and in that way, in fact, he is doing nothing but helping to perpetuate that oppression. Is *that* what the masses need—either Black masses or anybody else? Is that the ideological and political line the masses need? Or do they need a *different* line?

In a discussion involving some people from a housing project, I posed this question: If I discovered a cure for sickle cell anemia and malaria, which affect a lot of people from Africa and Asia, should I hide it because I'm not African or Asian? Or should I tell people: Here's the cure, now let's get rid of these diseases that are a scourge on people, causing tremendous suffering? What's your orientation here?

I don't intend to *not* tell people what I know. Yes, I intend to learn as much as I can, because there are a lot of things that I don't know, and that will always be true. Right now there are things that vex me terribly because I don't know them. I don't know them, so I keep wrangling with them—things having to do with how we are going to bring forward the proletariat and the basic masses in a class-conscious revolutionary way in the broadest sense of that—not in a narrow and reformist

sense, but in a sweeping and revolutionary sense. There are still real contradictions that we have to keep banging our heads against, not in a meaningless way but in a way to make a breakthrough—theory to practice and back and forth, until we achieve the necessary breakthroughs. But I don't intend to keep what I *do* know from people and not struggle with people about what I know—including, frankly, the leadership role that I play. Because the masses of people need this.

You know, you can't be all things to all people. I can't be a Black, female, lesbian, etc., etc.—and neither can anybody else be all these kinds of things, because you can always keep adding on other “identity politics” elements. We can't be all things to all people, and we shouldn't try to be. We should be a communist vanguard.

When some people say, “I don't want to follow no white man,” that is an ideological question having to do, fundamentally, with what kind of world they want to live in. That's what it gets down to. It may not be immediately apparent to them, but we should struggle it through and get into that question. Because *that* is what is ultimately posed. We have to take people through the process so they see that *this* is what is involved, but this is what we need to get to. And, in terms of ideology—in terms of how people see the world and what it can and should be—economism, nationalism, instrumentalism, determinism and utilitarianism: all those ways of thinking ultimately are in the way of making the most thorough revolution and bringing a whole new world into being—so we have to defeat all this and ultimately sweep it aside, ideologically.

Whom you choose to follow, whom you look to as a leader, has to do with what they represent, what road they are on and, fundamentally, what kind of world they

are working and struggling to bring into being—or, to put it another way, where they will lead people who follow them. This applies to all the ideological questions that come up around leadership—not only from a nationalist perspective, but an anarchist or bourgeois-democratic one as well—they all fundamentally get down to what kind of world you think we should live in, and could live in, and what you want to do about it.

NOTES:

1. "Revolution: Why It's Necessary, Why It's Possible, What It's All About," a film of a talk given by Bob Avakian in the U.S. in 2003. Available on DVD and VHS from Three Q Video, 2038 W. Chicago Ave., #126D, Chicago, IL 60622 or on the web at threeQvideo.com.

THE COMING CIVIL WAR AND REPOLARIZATION FOR REVOLUTION IN THE PRESENT ERA

Just to be clear, I didn't choose this title lightly or facetiously, but in all seriousness. In speaking to "a coming civil war" I am "drawing inspiration" from Newt Gingrich (the prominent Republican politician who was formerly the Speaker of the House of Representatives), who has made the observation that what's happening now in the electoral arena and the broader things that it reflects in U.S. society is analogous to what was going on in the U.S. in the 1840s and the 1850s, and that this isn't something that will—I'm paraphrasing, but this is the essence—this isn't something that will go away. It will only be decided when one side or the other wins out. While, obviously, we don't take at face value things that representatives of the ruling class say, we do have to think seriously about this, and I do think that this reflects—through the prism of Gingrich's own point of view, it does reflect a very profound reality. We can look at the alignment in society now and see very profound polarization—without reducing things to how things fall out in bourgeois elections, which are shaped by the bourgeoisie after all, and by the very real conflicts within the bourgeoisie. This is shaped not simply through manipulation on the part of some unified bourgeoisie, but by real conflicts within the bourgeoisie—conflicts that do, more or less, correspond to what was said in the piece on "The Pyramid of Power"¹ in terms of what is represented by the Republicans on the one hand, and the Democrats on the other.

So there is something about that Newt Gingrich statement, there is something about the alignment that you can see, there is something about what was represented in the *New York Times Magazine* article by Ron Suskind², with its representation of the polarization between "reality-based" and "faith-based" communi-

ties—which, once again, in and of itself and in the way that it's expressed, represents the conflicts seen through the eyes of, and more or less proceeding from the standpoint of, the capitalist ruling class itself, but nevertheless does speak to something very real in U.S. society at this point.

You really do have two fundamentally opposed forces in society, in potential; and I'll speak to how we can't leave the alignment and the polarization as it is now—for many different reasons and in many different dimensions and on many different levels it has to be transformed. But you can see that (even while many people are not fully aware of this yet, though many are becoming more fully aware of it) there are two camps in antagonistic conflict with each other. Out of this can arise different kinds of resolutions, representing different interests, and ultimately different classes, going to wholly different places in terms of the future of society and the world.

We have spoken philosophically, drawing from Mao, about how "irreconcilable" is not a correct philosophical concept because the opposite would be "reconcilable," and Mao pointed out that there are no reconcilable contradictions. But nonetheless [*BA laughs*], leaving that aside, these really are irreconcilable world views and fundamentally irreconcilable views on what society ought to be based on and what it ought to be like.

There is something very profound and important going on here, even though—and this is another fundamental reason why there is a need for repolarization—the pole of the revolutionary proletariat, and the forces gravitating to it, are at this present time woefully small, nowhere near as large and powerful as they need to be. That has to change—and that's where we come in. But it

is interesting, the comment by this guy Hertzberg from *The New Yorker*—to the effect that two bad things are going to happen because of the Bush re-election: One, all the terrible stuff Bush and company are going to do; and two, this is going to lead to, or provide an opening for, the revival (if you'll pardon the expression) of the radical left. So what people like that are recognizing, we should not fail to recognize—and seize on.

NOTES:

1. Bob Avakian, "The Pyramid of Power and the Struggle to Turn This Whole Thing Upside Down," *RW* No. 1237 (April 25, 2004).

2. "Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush," *The New York Times Magazine* (October 17, 2004).

THE DANGER OF THE CHRISTIAN FASCISTS AND THE CHALLENGES THIS POSES

When we talk about the dangers posed by the Christian Fascists and the configuration in ruling structures of U.S. society now, some people say, “Are you people just trying to scare people into scurrying to your banner?” Well, no. This is very real. And one of the things that was very important in the discussion that followed the talk I gave on the dictatorship of the proletariat (“Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism”), was the question about whether there’s “a perfect fit” between this Christian Fascist program and the interests and needs of the ruling class, at this time at least. (This discussion was published in *RW* #1261, December 12, 2004.) And I believe this was dealt with in a dialectical as well as a materialist way there, in saying “No, there’s not a perfect fit, but that doesn’t mean this program won’t come to predominate.” It was pointed out that things have a momentum and dynamic of their own; these Christian Fascist forces are being courted and even manipulated by people like Bush adviser Karl Rove and others, but that doesn’t mean they don’t have their own agenda, their own interests (in a manner of speaking), their own outlook, and their own objectives that they’re fighting for. And the more that they’ve been organized, the more this takes on a certain life of its own.

As reflected in that *New York Times Magazine* article by Ron Suskind (“Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush” — *New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 2004), this is being recognized even by significant sections of the ruling class and their representatives and spokespeople, and certainly we should not fail to recognize the seriousness of this — both in terms of the dangers it poses, and also in terms of the contradictions it reflects, including in particular the intensifying contradictions within the ruling class. There is a contradiction here, between “not a perfect fit” and the fact that nonetheless there are driving forces behind this Christian Fascist program, which are very powerful and very pow-

erfully connected. That’s also a very acute contradiction that’s playing itself out and will continue in an even more intense way to play itself out, if not in a straight line necessarily, over a period of time—and perhaps not that long a period of time.

In a number of talks and writings (for example, in the “Right-Wing Conspiracy” piece, *Preaching from a Pulpit of Bones*, the “Pyramid of Power” article, and recent talks I gave on religion¹)—I have been emphasizing that there is a force of Christian Fascists that is *very serious* about implementing this program. Some of the mass base that’s being mobilized behind this may not even be fully aware of the implications of this and what it would really look like to implement this program fully, or they may not even be fully aware that some of the driving forces within this *do* have in mind to implement this full program. Now, one of the things I have pointed out repeatedly, including in those talks on religion (and this is also in the “Right-Wing Conspiracy” piece), is that there is an acute contradiction between an insistence upon upholding the Bible literally and absolutely — insisting that every word is the divinely inspired and delivered word of god and must be upheld as such, on the one hand — and, on the other hand, things that broadly in society today, particularly a “modern” society like the U.S., can be accepted as decent, right, and just. This is a contradiction that, by and large, most of the mass base of this Christian Fascist movement is not even aware of. We have to hammer at those contradictions, and this is all the more important because, to a significant degree, the leaders of this Christian Fascist movement do not want these people who make up their base to be aware of this *at this stage* (or at least not fully aware). But, in those talks on religion, I emphasized the point: If you take the word of the Bible as literal and absolute, then you must be in favor of executing homosexuals — not just condemning them as sinners but executing them. You must be in favor

of executing women accused of witchcraft, you must be in favor of insisting that people can't get out of even abusive marriages, and in particular women can't. You must be in favor of insisting that children who are rebellious against their parents should be put to death. And on and on—the list of cruel outrages that the Bible upholds, and insists on, is truly long and horrendous.

Now, if you look around, you will see that—for example, in relation to the whole Matthew Shepard outrage—there were these people from Kansas (or wherever they are), these preachers and their followers, who showed up and denounced Shepard as a “fag” and said he was condemned to hell, showing absolutely no sympathy nor mercy. And if you read David Brock's book, *The Republican Noise Machine*, particularly Chapter 7, “Ministers of Propaganda,” he quotes a lot of these people, these Christian Fascist ideologues, saying that a lot of these outrageous things that are in the Bible *should* be done. It is somewhat similar to what's described by Claudia Koonz in *The Nazi Conscience*, where she discusses how Hitler was rather cautious, rather circumspect, even after consolidating power, in terms of toning down his overtly anti-Semitic tirades for a while—while at the same time the *mass base*, the stormtroopers, were running wild with that stuff. And we saw where that all ended up. Perhaps in 1933 or '34 Hitler did not intend to carry out the “final solution,” the mass genocide of the Jews, at least in the way and on the scale it was carried out, but that's where the logic led. It might not have led there if things had gone a different way with the war, and so on, but that's where the logic led under the circumstances that actually evolved. I pointed out, for example, in “Right-Wing Conspiracy,” that there is a genocidal element in this whole Christian Fascist program—a genocidal program that would be directed toward many people in inner cities and others whom people like the prominent Christian Fascist Pat Robertson regard as putting the stain of sin onto the land. I quoted Pat Robertson on this and then drew out the logical implications of what he was saying. And I made the point in the talks on religion; and also in the talk “Elections, Democracy and Dictatorship, Resistance and Revolution,”² about why it is that the Bible belt is also the *lynching* belt. I used that as a metaphor to speak to why it is that you can't uphold traditional morality in this society, with its whole history, and not uphold the most virulent and grotesque kind of white supremacy and repression of Black people and other oppressed nationalities.

Look at Pat Robertson's writings. And who is Pat Robertson? Just some lunatic? Is he a Jeremiah somewhere ranting in the wilderness? No, he's a prominent figure in the ruling structures of this society. Look at the

things that are quoted from him in “Right-Wing Conspiracy.” Not only his lunatic claims about his personal experience and trauma of undergoing a demonic attack one morning in a hotel near Seattle, Washington, but his statement that it may well be the case that Satan is directly in charge of major cities in the U.S.—and that things like Ouija boards and New Ageism provide openings for the devil to enter. And this is of a piece with his lunacy in general, which is not only unscientific but *anti*-scientific—including his attacks on the scientifically established fact of evolution. (See, for example, Robertson's book *Answers to 200 of Life's Most Probing Questions*.) I remember reading a book by a woman who got out of this kind of fundamentalism (I mentioned this in the conversation with Bill Martin³—the book is *This Dark World*, by Carolyn S. Briggs): She talks about how she used to go around and get rid of statuettes and things in her house because she was afraid that Satanic forces would enter through them and get to her children. Well, that's one thing—she was a person with barely a high school education, if that, at the time, and she was just a foot soldier for the Christian Fascists, unconscious largely in terms of the larger implications of this. But for people like Pat Robertson it's very different. Pat Robertson made this chilling statement—that when people get sick of all this decadence and the rest, we will take over.

These people are deadly serious, and there doesn't have to be a “perfect fit.” If things go a certain way and there's no other force in the ruling class with both the coherence and the power to prevent it, this may become the ruling force in society. And they have every intention of becoming that. They are not going to go away. And, as has been pointed out, you can't keep making promises to these forces, as the Republican Party does—you can't keep making promises and then leave them unfulfilled, like “we're going to get rid of *Roe v. Wade*, we're going to outlaw abortion.” There is a certain tension there that will rupture beyond those bounds at a certain point. We have seen further indications of this in things like the campaign to hound Republican Senator Arlen Specter after his comment that, basically, Bush shouldn't nominate judges who are going to abolish *Roe v. Wade*. We are just seeing the beginning of things like that.

And there *is* a genocidal element in this Christian Fascist program. You can see this if you read what Pat Robertson says and follow the logic of it—once again it's the Richard Pryor thing, “the logical conclusion of the logic.” As I have pointed out, Robertson doesn't just say that the death penalty should be used for murder, for homicide, he insists it should be used for crimes that bring a stain upon the society, and which alienate it from god. Well, think about the implications of that and how

far-reaching that can be, especially when this is being interpreted by theocratic rulers, people with the mindset and worldview of Robertson.

And, although I have been urgently pointing to this phenomenon for a number of years, at this point at least I am not the only one who is commenting on this in these kind of terms. For example, Mark Crispin Miller, a professor of media studies at New York University, who has written a book entitled *The Bush Dyslexicon*, refers to these people as “Christo-fascists.” And he makes a very interesting and important observation: Don’t expect to see people with swastikas goose-stepping down the street saying “Heil Hitler”—that is not how this is going to come to America, it’s going to come in this theocratic religious form; it’s already here and it’s already powerful. So, I am not the only one recognizing this—and Crispin Miller is a Jeffersonian Democrat (probably a “Big D” but certainly a “small d” democrat), expressly so. He talks about how these “Christo-fascists,” as he calls them, want to go back not just before the civil rights movement, not just before the civil war and the abolition of slavery, but back before the Enlightenment.

And the fact is that, as I have pointed out, the more you dig into this, the more you’ll see that the Enlightenment is a watershed event in history for these fundamentalist fanatics. To them this is a time when society turned away from God—even before the Supreme Court decision, in the early 1960s, eliminating prayer in public schools in the U.S.—going back several centuries, the time of the Enlightenment is when society began to go away from God and towards hell, in these people’s view. So, this is a very serious thing, with very serious implications, including this potentially genocidal element to it. And there doesn’t have to be a “perfect fit” for this to become the ruling and dominating and operative force and form of bourgeois dictatorship in this country—in this period.

The fact is that the Christian Fascists are not an ephemeral phenomenon—they are not something that is just going to be around for a little while—a flash in the pan that is going to go away. Nor is this something that’s turned off and on like a spigot by people like Karl Rove and other political operatives in the ruling class. This is a force which has been developed, and cohered, and led, and ideologically indoctrinated and trained, and honed over decades; yes, by political and ideological operatives, but some of whom actually themselves believe in this whole vision and these objectives. Had that *not* happened, a lot of these forces would have been more dispersed, they wouldn’t have lived as much in a self-contained world, and they wouldn’t have had the same impact they have had and are having—being politically

organized and ideologically conditioned, and oriented, and primed in a certain way. But that is what has happened, and that does take on a life and a momentum of its own. It’s not something anybody can just turn off at this point. In Germany, after he consolidated power, Hitler slaughtered the SA stormtroopers at a certain point, because they were getting in his way. That’s what the Nazi leadership had to do, to get rid of that particular force at that time, after Hitler had consolidated power; but it would be a whole other matter to do something like that to these Christian Fascist forces. Plus, I don’t know who would have the interests to do that, and the inclinations to do that, within the U.S. ruling class.

So, again, it is very important to understand that these Christian Fascists cannot and will not let up. They will not go away, they will not recede into the background, they will not leave science alone, they will not leave the arts alone, they will not leave education alone, they will not leave social relations alone, they will not leave the culture, broadly speaking, alone. They will not leave daily life and work alone. There was another article recently in the *New York Times Magazine* about these “faith based work places.”⁴ These reactionary Christian fundamentalists are creating, on the one hand, their own infrastructure and self-contained universe where you watch Fox News, and religious channels, and you get “the word,” about the world as well as about religion, from the Pat Robertson 700 Club or whatever, and you listen to evangelists on the radio and watch them on the TV—and this fundamentalist shit is on 24 hours a day, all day every day, with massive productive forces and sophisticated technology devoted to it. And, frighteningly, but it’s the reality we face, there are massive turnouts of people at these fundamentalist church services, even sometimes multi-national crowds. They cannot and they will not let up. Mark Crispin Miller made this comment, that if you watch only Fox News and live in this whole world I’ve been describing, you have about as much sense of reality as people living in the ninth century. Now, again that’s exaggeration, it’s hyperbole (and he would likely acknowledge that), but there’s some reality to that. There have been surveys and studies that show that these people—not just confined to the Christian Fascists, but more broadly people who regularly watch Fox News—are qualitatively more misinformed about basic issues than other people in U.S. society, even more misinformed than those who watch CNN, for example. I think a majority (or near majority) of those who regularly watch things like Fox News still believe that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, that there was a tie between Iraq and al-Qaida—an operative ongoing link and functioning relationship—and a large number of these people believe that Iraq had something to do with September 11th.

But that's just one manifestation, it's much bigger than that, in terms of not only information and politics but worldview. For example, our Party's national spokesperson Carl Dix talked about how, at a forum on the elections he spoke at, in Harlem, somebody actually raised: "We've got a real problem here, these people can't be swayed or persuaded, they don't listen to reason, they don't acknowledge reason." This is one of the things even the *New York Times* is bringing out: It doesn't matter if Bush lied, because Bush is on a mission from God (not in the humorous, lighthearted way of the "Blues Brothers" movie). Bush is there—like Jerry Boykin, a general who's still being promoted in the U.S. military, said—Bush is there because God wanted him there, even though in 2000 he didn't win the popular vote. It's not because of very earthly machinations, but because God wanted him there. So what difference does it make about facts and lies and so on, if this is what's behind Bush. God's will and purpose is greater than any fact, or any lie.

So these people cannot and will not let up. And there are two different universes here that people are recognizing—and we'd better recognize it. This is not the total configuration of ruling class forces and ruling class splits—even the Republican Party has many different forces within it, and there are contradictions within this, including contradictions between the Christian Fascists and some other forces within the Republican Party. And, of course, in the society more broadly, there is a much more complex configuration—social configuration and class configuration—and different political and ideological, and social, and cultural trends of many different kinds. But the role and importance of the Christian Fascists—within the Republican Party, where they play a major and in many ways dominant role, and within society more generally, where their influence is very significant and is now growing—this is a major feature of the alignment of the ruling class, and of the character of the society.

There *are*, in a very real sense, two different universes, two different worldviews and visions of how the world is and ought to be, that are in fundamental and ultimately antagonistic conflict with each other within U.S. society. Newt Gingrich is essentially right in saying that these cannot continue to co-exist without one side or the other finally and decisively winning out and defeating the other.⁵ But right now it is a fact that the alignment, the polarization that presently exists—the way in which the two sides are taking shape politically and ideologically—is not a good thing. It is not a good thing for two crucial reasons: 1) The opposition to the Christian Fascists, and to the reactionary juggernaut in which they

are a decisive force, is still characterized and dominated far too much by outlooks and programs which, in and of themselves, cannot mount the necessary opposition because, despite very real and profound differences, they still see things within and operate within the confines of the same system which has given rise to the Christian Fascists and to their becoming a major force within the ruling class as well as the broader society; and 2) the forces in society which represent, at least in potential, a real, revolutionary alternative, are by and large not yet mobilized and organized around a revolutionary worldview and program. Left to its current trajectory and momentum, this can only lead to very bad results.

But, again, that is where we come in. The challenge we have to take up is to apply the world outlook and methodology of communism, in a scientific and creative way, to correctly and deeply analyze this reality, in all its complexity, and to act to *change* it—to bring about a radical repolarization in society in a way that offers the prospect and the hope of the real, the revolutionary way out and way forward for society and humanity.

NOTES:

1. See "The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy...And Why Clinton and the Democrats Are No Answer" (RW #1255, October 17, 2004); *Preaching from a Pulpit of Bones: We Need Morality But Not Traditional Morality* (Chicago: Banner Press, 1999); "Elections, Resistance, and Revolution: The Pyramid of Power And the Struggle to Turn This Whole Thing Upside Down" (RW #1237, April 25, 2004); "Christianity and Society—The Old Testament and the New Testament, Resistance and Revolution" and "God Doesn't Exist—And We Need Liberation Without Gods" (audio recordings available at bobavakian.net).

2. Audio files of the three talks referred to here are available on the web at bobavakian.net.

3. Bob Avakian and Bill Martin, *Marxism and the Call of the Future: Conversations on Ethics, History, and Politics* (Chicago: Open Court, 2005).

4. "With God at Our Desks," *The New York Times Magazine*, Sunday, October 31, 2004.

5. This point is discussed in another excerpt from this series, "The Coming Civil War and Repolarization for Revolution in the Present Era" (RW #1274, April 10, 2005).

CHANGES IN THE WORLD AND THE “CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS”— WITHIN THIS CIVILIZATION

Just briefly, let's talk about the dialectical relation between the international and the domestic dimensions of what is going on, and what has gone on over several decades. Let's look at some key conjunctures and nodal points. Where did all this stuff that the '60s was part of come from, what was the underlying basis of that? It was the resolution of World War 2, and what arose out of that on an international scale, and what became the principal contradiction in the world—between the oppressed nations of the Third World and imperialism—and other things we've analyzed in connection with that. The transformations in the southern U.S. were related to that—the changes in southern agriculture and related political, social, and cultural changes—and this, in turn, was related to what was going on in the world as a whole, both economically but also superstructurally (in terms of politics, ideology, and culture). There was the civil rights movement that arose in that context, and the Vietnam war also arose in that context. In other words, without being mechanical, there's plenty of international dimension that has played and ultimately is playing a determining role in all this.

And then go to the situation today. What sets the context for all this is the resolution of the contradiction with the Soviet Union—“the end of the Cold War,” as it is put—by highly unexpected means: the collapse of the Soviet Union. And then there is superstructural stuff going on in relation to and in the context of that, in all different kinds of ways, including different sections of the ruling class in the U.S. trying to forge new strategies and new consensus. And it's true that, as a comrade pointed out, Clinton did try to bring forward a new consensus; but it was within the same fundamental framework as has historically existed within the U.S. What Clinton was doing was objectively bringing greater hardship for masses of people, but frankly it was not bringing a “clash of civilizations” right within *this* civilization, if

you want to put it that way. It was not bringing two different “irreconcilable”—or, to put it in different and perhaps better terms, philosophically, two antagonistically opposed worlds and worldviews directly up against each other. And that is what's being posed now.

Now, the fact is, if there is another event like September 11, the configuration and the dynamics are going to change dramatically again. Some people, including some generally progressive people, left to their own devices, are perhaps going to join the Christopher Hitchens' in deciding to cast their lot with the *Christian* theocratic fascists of U.S. imperialism rather than the Islamic theocratic fascists. Now, that is a metaphor for saying that a lot of the forces who right now don't think they can live in the same world with these Christian Fascists will, in those circumstances (of further attacks on U.S. soil) be inclined to go under the umbrella of whatever the government in the U.S. is, even if it's a Christian Fascist one, to protect themselves. If we allow that dynamic to go on, things will become worse, even much worse, than they are now. And, on the other hand, not only progressive people but even people like Andrew Sullivan, who is gay, should be reminded of the Niemöller statement (in Nazi Germany: First they came for the communists, but he was not a communist so he did nothing...¹) and think about whose wing they believe they can crawl up under.

That was the point that came up sharply in a recent Bill Maher show—in particular the comments by D.L. Hughley, who insisted: I believe in Jesus, but I don't believe Jesus resides only in the “red states” (where Bush and the Republicans carried the vote). Andrew Sullivan, who was also on that show, was getting all puffed up, and so Bill Maher says to him: “Well, try going into one of those churches in Mississippi and see how you...”

And Sullivan cut in: "I do belong to a church, and I'm quite welcome in it." And they both, Hughley and Maher, responded: "In Mississippi?!" That's where the gay question and the Black national question come together—in Mississippi (literally and metaphorically).

There is a particularity that they're talking about with Mississippi too. Andrew Sullivan can find a church in New York or Washington, but he will have a hard time finding one in Mississippi. There's still a particularity to Mississippi. Malcolm X was right in making the point, "Stop talking about the South—as long as you're south of the Canadian border, you're south." But still there is another side to it. There is still a South. My point about the Bible belt and the lynching belt—how they are the same—is not that the South is the only place they have ever lynched people, but there *is* a point there.

In any case, this is the dynamic that's in play now, and it is important to understand that there is a difference between Hitler getting appointed Chancellor and the Nazis having totally consolidated power and crushing and eliminating the opposition. Without being mechanical, that analogy is indeed very relevant to what is going on in the U.S. now.

I agree with the point (made by another comrade), I do think Bush actually believes this fundamentalist shit, but he is also the president of the United States and he can't *simply* be a Christian Fascist. I believe he is a Christian Fascist, but at this point he can't *simply* be a Christian Fascist. That makes for (and reflects) another complexity. And there is a difference between what is the leading edge in the Republican Party and what is the character of the society overall, at this point at least.

We can't be reductionist: The leading edge in the Republican Party is this Christian Fascism, the Republican Party is the leading party, and right now the ruling party, in the U.S. and bourgeois politics in this country is increasingly dominated by one party, the Republicans...so therefore the country is already fascist. That is not a correct way of reasoning, not correct methodologically. You can't go mathematically—by mathematical reduction—to arrive at a conclusion like that. In fact, it is not even the case that a Christian Fascist consensus has won out within the ruling class at this point. That has not happened yet, and we should not confuse things. This is not being ruled as a Christian Fascist biblically based country—at this point.

But there are forces fighting for that who are not going to be satisfied until that *is* the way the country is being ruled. It's got to be a biblically based, militarized, patriarchal and male supremacist, and, yes, white supremacist society—that is in essence the Christian Fascist program. And, yes, this means that their religious

fundamentalist epistemology must be in command.

There is going to be a battle over what is truth and how do you arrive at the truth. There is so-called "biblically based" truth vs. actual truth. There is going to be fierce struggle over these epistemological questions as well as political struggle. What is truth? These right-wingers write things like, "People claim Bush 'lied' "—and they put "lied" in quotes—about Iraq and WMD [*BA laughs*]. I mean, here you see clearly that this is a battle of epistemology. Bush lied *without* the quotes, okay?—and everybody saw him do it. But, as another comrade was pointing out, this is not true in the worldview of these people who put forward, or take up, this fascist, and in particular Christian Fascist, epistemology. What Bush says is true: even if it's a lie, it is true—or it doesn't matter, because it's subsumed by a larger "Truth," with a capital T.

This superstructural stuff does matter a great deal. What was Pat Buchanan talking about in speaking of a great division in American society that will reassert itself?² This is a division that has developed out of all the upheaval of the '60s—and everything else that's happened since. If you read the supplement on the Clinton impeachment ("The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy...and Why Clinton and the Democrats Are No Answer")³ it talks about two phenomena at work, in terms of the problems the ruling class has in promoting patriotism, especially blind patriotism—people not being patriotic enough, from the point of view of the ruling class. One is the '60s thing—everything that millions of people learned through that whole experience, which makes them not want to be very patriotic, or certainly not blindly and unquestioningly patriotic—and the other is precisely the '90s thing—all this "gold rush" (get rich quick) shit makes for a lot of individualism, and it doesn't make for much self-sacrifice for the "larger imperialist good." It isn't just the one phenomena that's being talked about there. We should understand the nuances, the gradations, the levels, the contradictory character, the particularity, all of that.

There is right now this whole battle shaping up over these two different worlds and worldviews. And there are millions and millions of people, right now, non-religious and religious people, who are deeply troubled by what is happening—and there are a lot of people who are religious among the basic masses who are saying, "We are fucked by this Bush thing." That doesn't mean inroads can't be made among them by the Bushites and Christian Fascists—we have been talking about that, and we should definitely be aware of that. But many among the masses who are religious are saying, "we're fucked"—not because Bush is religious but because of what he is

actually doing. The appeal to religious fundamentalism doesn't have the same impact, it doesn't have the same political effect, right now at least, on many of these masses, because they have different material interests, and—without being mechanical materialist—there is a point to material interests. But it would be very wrong to think that this religious fundamentalism doesn't have an effect on these basic masses.

In fact, there is a tug between some of this super-structural stuff, and in particular religion, on the one hand, and material factors, on the other hand. Part of the problem with Thomas Frank's reasoning in his book *What's the Matter with Kansas?*—his argument that people who are getting screwed economically by the policies of the Republicans shouldn't be supporting the Republicans, although they are supporting them now—part of the problem is that actually many of the people Frank is talking about are present or former labor aristocrats, bourgeoisified workers, and lower level and working petty bourgeois. They don't have a whole history of being fucked over in this country, by the system, in the same way as people at the base of society, people in the inner cities and so on—people who have a whole history of this, so when they get fucked again, they respond on the basis of that whole history. Whereas these other people that Thomas Frank is talking about respond differently, because their history and their place in society has been and is still different—and part of the picture is that their self-identity, to use that term, has involved trying to *set themselves apart* from the people who are held down at the base of society.

This is not to argue that Frank is wasting his time agonizing over what is happening with these strata of people, or that it is not important to try to win them over to a progressive, and indeed to a revolutionary, position. But, precisely in order to do that to the maximum extent possible, it is necessary to understand, in a thoroughly materialist way, what their social position is, and what it has been, how that is changing and what are the, very contradictory, responses this calls forth among them, rather than just looking at them through some generally populist lens that fails to take note of important economic, social, cultural and ideological distinctions among different sections of the people. For example, within a broad category like "working people," there are impoverished proletarians, who are bitterly exploited by the capitalists who employ them, or are denied employment altogether, at least much of the time; and there are, on the other hand, self-employed working people and even small business people who may do some work themselves but also employ, and exploit, a few others. While the people in all these categories are in a vastly different position from the truly rich and powerful ruling class of capitalists, at the same time there are significant differ-

ences among these different strata among the people, and these differences have a definite effect on their outlook and how they respond to being further pushed down.

There is a rich tapestry involved in all this—not all of it is good, I don't mean "rich" in that sense, but a very complex tapestry with a lot of different things tugging and pulling on different sections of people in contradictory directions.

Even with the Christian Fascist social base, as we pointed out in our statement right after the election ("The Will of the People Was *Not* Expressed in This Election"), they have kids getting killed in the war in Iraq, and more of them are going to get killed as this global war for empire is carried on. And they have kids who go out of this confined world (of Christian fundamentalism, etc.), into another world, for example when they go into the military. Yes, they go into another Christian Fascist universe within the military, but they can't erect complete barriers around the rest of the world they send these kids out into. It's more complex than that. And these strata are going to take economic hits. There is constantly a complex interplay between the base and superstructure—between underlying economic factors, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, political, ideological, and cultural factors. And we have to approach this with a dialectical materialist, not a vulgar materialist, method. There has been enough vulgar materialism in the world, and there is a need to thoroughly rupture with that.

This configuration within U.S. society could change. International events could change the character back toward what was happening at the time of the "New Situation/ Great Challenges" supplement,⁴ soon after September 11, 2001. But this Christian Fascist element is not going to go away. That is the point I keep coming back to: They are not going to go away, and they are not going to give up. As other people have said, this is a monster that's demanding to be fed. It's stayed on its leash pretty much because it's been promised to be fed. But it has its own dynamics.

So all this makes for a very volatile situation, and one that requires us to grasp it—and to act on it, to transform it—in all its complexity and its potential for an extreme resolution, one way or the other.

NOTES:

1. "First they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist.

"Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.

"Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.

"Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't

speak up because I was a Protestant.

“Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.”

—Pastor Martin Niemöller, imprisoned by the Nazis from 1937-1945. Initially a supporter of Hitler, Niemöller realized too late what the Nazis were all about. Niemöller criticized himself in this now famous quote and gave many speeches criticizing his fellow clergy, and other progressive people, for not opposing the Nazis when they had a chance.

2. For example, in his book *The Death of the West*, published after the September 11 attacks, Pat Buchanan accurately predicted the following: The sense of national unity which existed right after September 11 would not last; he argued that there are deep social and cultural and other divides in this society, and they were going to reassert themselves.

3. “The Truth About Right Wing Conspiracy...And Why Clinton and the Democrats Are No Answer” by Bob Avakian was first published in the *Revolutionary Worker*, November 1998, in the midst of the attempts to impeach Clinton. It was republished in October 2004, on the eve of the election of 2004. It is available in issue 1255 of the *Revolutionary Worker* and online at revcom.us.

4. “The New Situation and the Great Challenges” by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP,USA, *Revolutionary Worker* #1143, March 17, 2002, available online at revcom.us

THE REPUBLI-FASCISTS... AND THE REPUBLI-CRATS AND WHERE IS THE REAL ALTERNATIVE?

The Democratic Party is after all a party of the ruling class, it *is* a party of the capitalist system. At the same time, the Republican Party, especially now, is the party of openly and aggressively benefiting the rich and further impoverishing people—benefiting the rich and driving down the poor. It *is* the party, *openly and aggressively*, of white supremacy. Let's not forget, these people are opposed to affirmative action, these are the people who brought you *The Bell Curve*. (This refers to a book published during the 1990s which claimed, based on phony science and faulty methods, to show that there are unchangeable, genetically based differences which account for inequalities, including the supposed mental superiority of people of European descent as compared with people of African descent. The studies, statistics, methods and approaches cited in this book have been soundly refuted, both before and after the publication of this book, but the book was nevertheless promoted and treated as serious scholarship within many mainstream institutions, including media, and in particular it became part of the ideological arsenal of "conservatives" in arguing against things like affirmative action and more generally concessionary social programs whose stated purpose was to help overcome social inequalities.)

It is not a matter of gimmicks when we point to what these people represent—their stands in support of the death penalty, unleashing the police without restraint, and so on. Again, it's not that the Democratic Party is not for these things—there are real reasons why I (and others) have referred to the Democrats at times as "Republi-crats." But the Republicans are the party of *openly and aggressively* doing this—imprisoning more people, unleashing the police against more people, impoverishing more people, attacking people's rights

more—all openly and aggressively. That's why it is correct, and not hype, to refer to them as Republi-fascists.

As I have said a number of times: These reactionaries should not even be allowed to use "conservative" to describe themselves. We should say, "Conservative, my ass, these people are Nazis."

And, again, what they are all about definitely includes open white supremacy. What does it mean when you look at the fact that all the "Dixiecrats" have become Republicans? ("Dixiecrats" refers to the bourgeois politicians in the south who, after Reconstruction was ended in 1877, openly stood for segregation and white supremacy and were part of the Democratic Party, representing its "southern wing." Since the time that the government, particularly through the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, was forced to make concessions to the civil rights struggle and pass certain laws and policies outlawing outright segregation and open discrimination, many of these types of southern politicians have, over the past several decades, moved from the Democratic to the Republican Party.)

But, again, the fact is that the Democrats support most of this program. They do have a different "cohering logic" than the Christian Fascist and overall Nazi-type logic which is increasingly dominant in the Republican Party. And they do have differences over some policies, such as taxes and social security. But, despite very real and sometimes sharp differences, when you get down to it, what the Republicans are doing is, to a large degree, agreed on by the Democrats as well — including such crucial things as the war in Iraq and the broader war for empire carried out under the banner of "war against terrorism." And what the Democrats may not agree with, they overwhelmingly go along with in any case. Witness,

for example, the confirmation of Alberto Gonzales as the new Attorney General—*after* it was well established that he played a key part in formulating the defense of torture by the government and the position that the president can act contrary to international law, and U.S. law for that matter. The Democrats caved in on this, just as they did with the appointment of that other fascist, Ashcroft, as Bush's first Attorney General. Why? Because the Democrats are the representatives of the same system, and fundamentally for that reason they cannot offer any real alternative. I spoke to this in "The "Pyramid of Power"¹ and it is something we need to keep going back to and deepening people's understanding of, in order to enable people to see the need to break out of this whole framework of mainstream bourgeois politics in order to bring about a real alternative.

NOTES:

1. Bob Avakian, "The Pyramid of Power and the Struggle to Turn This Whole Thing Upside Down," RW/OR #1269. Also available online at revcom.us.

ON MANDATES... LIARS... AND THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE

Bush has no legitimate mandate. The will of the people was *not* expressed in the 2004 election—not only because of voter intimidation and fraud, which there definitely was some of, but beyond all that, and most essentially, because the people were not given a real choice. They were not given a real avenue in which they could express their opposition to what is represented by Bush. The real story of what is happening and the alternative to it was never presented in the election—certainly it was not presented by Kerry and the Democrats.

Bush was never straight-up called a liar and called to account for his lying, just to take one basic thing. There were three presidential debates and one vice-presidential debate, and yes, “misleading” was tossed around by Kerry and the Democrats, but never was Bush called out as a liar and called to account for his lying around Iraq and other things. The Democrats refused to do it because, especially on the most crucial issues such as the war in Iraq, they shared the same fundamental program as the Republicans.

So, the fact that nobody can really dispute is this: never was this whole program of Bush’s frontally opposed, never was a real alternative offered to people, and particularly never over such crucial things as the war in Iraq or the Patriot Act. Kerry and the Democrats did not say, “Get rid of the Patriot Act”—Kerry said, “We should fix it.” Kerry and the Democrats did not say, “Bush lied, about weapons of mass destruction and other things, to get us into Iraq, and we should get out.” Kerry said, “Bush made a mess of it and now you need to elect me so I can win this war.”

It is clear that the will of the people *could not possibly* be expressed, because they were not given any real alternative.

And people who *supported* Bush were never really confronted with the fact that Bush is a fucking liar—that he took the country to war and has killed thousands and

thousands of people in that war on the basis of flagrantly and brazenly lying before the whole world. He was never called to account for that. So people who thought they could rely on Bush to protect them were never even confronted with that fact—of his outright lying and everything that goes along with that—in any real way. Certainly not in the context of this election—not by the candidate, Kerry, who was supposed to represent the “realistic alternative” to Bush.

A lot of exposure can and must be done around all this.

The central message is that we do not accept this election and its so-called “mandate,” we do not accept this whole program, and we need to manifest a massive repudiation of it in all kinds of forms. And in this we have to build a very broad unity, with a wide diversity of forces. We should try to unleash a lot of creativity around what that would mean—in the cultural sphere, in the overtly political sphere, in whatever spheres people are in. We should not aim low. We should aim high. We should call on people by saying: “This is too important just to go along with it—there is too much at stake for the whole world to just go along with this.” As we pointed out in our Party’s statement, right after the election¹, we have to have not just the attitude of letting it be known that we don’t agree with this, but an orientation of actually *stopping* it. This program of Bush’s is completely unacceptable.

And then we do need to go deeply into the basic point that the people were denied the chance to really express their will in this election. That question is going to come up, even from people who hate this program represented by Bush: “Well, yes, but people voted for it.” So we need to speak to that. At the same time, there is already a broad and deep sentiment—“No Mandate!” We need to build on that and give it the maximum possible, most powerful political expression.

And there needs to be struggle with many progressive people to help them sum up correctly what happened through this election. Some of them got caught up in trying to blame Nader—even in advance of the election—for Bush's staying in office. But the real point is that Kerry and the Democrats did not—and, more fundamentally, *could not*—offer a real alternative. It is crucial that people, as broadly as possible, draw the appropriate and correct lessons from all this, and that will take struggle, even as we are uniting with people to carry forward resistance in the circumstances where Bush remains in office and is aggressively accelerating his program in every sphere of society, and throughout the world.

In a lot of cases, when the masses turned out to vote in this (2004 election), even though they were not given any real alternative, it was a positive thing—or had a very definite positive side—it was a politicizing of the masses on a not so terrible basis. The bourgeoisie partly created the atmosphere—they created a politically charged atmosphere for their own reasons—but it hasn't all been, or remained, on their terms completely. The atmosphere is very politicized, and there is a lot of potential to turn this into something very positive, in more immediate terms and looking beyond that toward strategic revolutionary objectives. But, again, that will take work, and struggle.

NOTES:

1. "The Will of the People Was NOT Expressed in This Election."

THE CENTER — CAN IT HOLD? THE PYRAMID AS TWO LADDERS

Let's look again at this pyramid of power that I have spoken to before. In that piece on "The Pyramid of Power and the Struggle to Turn This Whole Thing Upside Down," I made the point that:

*"At the top of this pyramid are the people that rule this society. Here's the pyramid and here are the Republicans over here (on the right) with their shit going down to the right-wing social base of religious maniacs and fundamentalist fools. On the other hand here are the Democrats at the top of this pyramid (on the so-called 'left'), Who are the people that they try to appeal to—not that the Democrats represent their interests, but who are the people that the Democrats try to appeal to at the base, on the other side of the pyramid, so to speak? All the people who stand for progressive kinds of things, all the people who are oppressed in this society. For the Democrats, a big part of their role is to keep all those people confined within the bourgeois, the mainstream electoral process and to get them back into it when they have drifted away from—or broke out of—that framework."*¹

Well, we can also conceive of this as a pyramid made up of two ladders that are leaning against each other at the top; and the centrifugal forces at the bottom, pulling away from the center, can cause it to collapse. In that kind of context and in that kind of way, you can see how the question arises very acutely: the center—can it hold?

The polarization in the ruling class of the U.S. now is between centrist mainstream imperialist thought and program, on the one end, and, on the other end, fascist thought and program—all ultimately serving the same imperialist system. Yes, there are gradations. Yes, there are forces in between, and there are forces, especially

among the broader population, that don't fit into that configuration at all fundamentally, and others that we have to rupture out of it. But if you think of this pyramid analysis, this is basically what's at the top of the pyramid, what's represented on either side of the apex of this pyramid, to put it that way—that's what it is: mainstream imperialist thought and program, on the one side, and fascist thought and program on the other side, all rooted in and ultimately serving the same imperialist system.

And all this is increasingly moving to the right. That's why you had such a (to use their phrase) "disconnect" in this election between the Democratic Party leadership and the "mass base" of people who voted for the Democrats. Even at the Democratic Party convention in 2004, there was this huge gap and difference between the sentiments of the people there, who are Democratic Party lower level functionaries by and large—between their sentiments about key issues like Iraq, which were overwhelmingly to get out of Iraq for basically good reasons—and what was being articulated from the stage and by the candidate Kerry himself. And that great difference ran right to the election. This was a little bit like the phenomenon I spoke to, in terms of the 2002 mid-term election, where people poured out into the streets, largely as a result of the fact that they were desperate to have some way to oppose the Iraq war and the Democrats refused to give it to them. Well, this time around, in the 2004 Presidential election, the Democrats refused to give it to them again, but many people still went and very consciously voted—this was not an apathetic populace in this election, including among the basic masses. Yes, some people didn't vote, but this was a very politically charged and, on a certain level, politically aware populace on both sides of the polarization as it took shape around the election. And many people poured into voting, including a huge number of people who voted for Kerry who were saying, "yes, Kerry is no good," but

wanting desperately to get Bush out—and not for bad reasons overwhelmingly. The way that took expression is not what we want or need, but what was finding expression in that was something we definitely must unite with and do unite with, even though we have to divert it and lead it somewhere else.

So there was this very stark “disconnect” between these people and the Democrats they voted for. However, one of the things that does happen—and you could see this also through the electoral process—is something I observed in one of those short comments I made just before the election, which was printed in the *RW*², where I said that if you try to make the Democrats be what they are not and never will be, you will end up being more like what the Democrats actually are. And you could see that dynamic at work in the 2004 election too. Some people started adopting Kerry’s terms for criticizing Bush, even though they don’t agree with those terms. If you step back, do you agree that the point is that Bush is an inefficient commander-in-chief in Iraq? Is *that* your critique of what’s happening? For millions and millions of people the answer is clearly: No. But you still find people getting drawn into those terms.

So, on the one hand, this polarization is obviously not what we need. On the other hand, there is potential in it, in terms of the fundamental question of whether the center can hold—and what will happen if it doesn’t hold. It’s not at all guaranteed that if it doesn’t hold there will be a positive outcome, from the point of view of everything we’re about and are striving for, and seeking to lead masses of people to achieve. It’s not at all guaranteed that if the center, in its present form, doesn’t hold things will come out positively—it could all come out extremely negatively. In fact, right now that’s the greater likelihood—and that’s what got many people paralyzed with fear, frankly. And we have to do something about that too, through our work—ideological and political, and yes, ultimately organizational work on the basis of ideological and political line.

All the turmoil that’s going on in society reflects in a fundamental way our analysis that this is a period where the world is marked by a major transition with the potential for great upheaval—a period transition which began with the dissolution, or collapse, of the Soviet Union and its empire at the beginning of the 1990s. More and more we are seeing this borne out. This is opposed to the sort of classical “Third International” analysis of “the crisis of imperialism,” attributing everything U.S. imperialism is doing in the world to the depth of crisis it’s enmeshed in.³ That’s not to say that there aren’t dire conditions for masses of people and real political and other crises in large parts of the world, but “Third Inter-

national” notions of “crisis of imperialism” is not the way to understand the actual dynamics at work. The program that’s embodied in that National Security document of 2002⁴ the program that is represented by, as one book puts it, *The Rise of the Vulcans*, with Cheney and Rumsfeld and the rest, is not a program arising in response to a deepening crisis that’s gone on for three decades in more or less the same form—this would hardly account for “minor events” like the dissolution of the Soviet empire!⁵ Instead, what is going on in the world manifests itself as an expression of this period of major transition with the potential for great upheaval—upheaval which we’re obviously already seeing.

But there is a real question being posed: This is the Newt Gingrich point⁶—his own version of “the center cannot hold.” We’ve seen this in the Clinton impeachment crisis, in the 2000 election, and in a different form through the recent election and things bound up with it. The way in which the ruling class has been able to hold this society together and rule it, and been able to have its larger interests prevail over lesser partisan disputes, is already fraying to a significant degree. There are underlying material reasons for this, some of which is spoken to in *Preaching From a Pulpit of Bones*⁷ [as well as in the “Right-Wing Conspiracy” piece⁸]. There are significant changes in the economy—both the U.S. and world economy—particularly as this has been unleashed by the fall of the Soviet empire, there is the heightening globalization. There are the accompanying and corresponding changes inside the U.S., particularly in terms of both the necessity and opportunity to do away with the New Deal⁹ consensus and the Great Society programs¹⁰.

One of the things that is said in *Notes on Political Economy* is that when a legitimacy crisis occurs, when the “glue” that holds society together begins to come undone, and there is an attempt to forge a new ruling consensus, then it is acutely posed whether that attempt to forge a new ruling consensus (a new “social glue,” so to speak) is going to hold and work. That’s a very relevant point now and a very relevant thing to dig into more deeply in terms of all this.

So we do have these very acute contradictions in society *and* within the ruling class, which are not entirely under the control of anyone. We are not dealing with “a committee of the ruling class”—all sitting there turning political faucets off and on. There are people seeking to do that, political operatives like the Carl Roves, or whatever, but that is not the fundamental dynamic that is going on. There are different forces in the fray, within the ruling class and more broadly in society, and this is putting a tremendous pressure on the coherence of the center as it has existed and as they’re now seeking to reforge it through a lot of struggle. There is not one uniform group seeking to do this, but through struggle

there's an attempt to reforge a center and a ruling consensus, in the context of this period of major transition with the potential for great upheaval.

In "GO&GS" (*Great Objectives and Grand Strategy*)¹¹ I quoted Edward Luttwak's book *Turbo Capitalism*, speaking not so much to the religious fundamentalist aspect of what the ruling class is doing now but to the general punitive aspect of the U.S. culture at this time. And Luttwak actually says something rather striking. He says that the American form is less virulent, but there's a similarity with what occurred in Nazi Germany, where there is a non-economic expression of revenge for ultimately economic factors. This relates to the phenomenon Luttwak is referring to with the metaphor of turbo capitalism—the fast pace of life, the insecurity that is brought with it. Yes, many people have been making a lot of money, particularly in the '90s, but they don't have the job security, they don't have the life security they feel they had before. I have also quoted this other book, on suburbanization, *Fortress America*, where the authors talk about people retreating into suburban enclaves—trying to pull the drawbridge up around themselves [BA laughs]. There is actual instability and uncertainty and chaos and volatility, and there is also manufactured fear, which is something Michael Moore brought out in his movie *Bowling for Columbine*. There is both real and manufactured fear and bases for fear. But Luttwak's point about the non-economic expression of revenge for fundamentally or ultimately economic developments is a very significant part of the whole picture that we have to understand—and move to transform.

NOTES:

1. This article originally appeared in *Revolutionary Worker* #1231 (March 7, 2004) and is available online at revcom.us.

2. These comments, under the heading "Food for Thought While Agonizing Over Bush and Everything He Stands For," appeared in *Revolutionary Worker* #1254 (Oct. 10, 2004) and is available online at revcom.us.

3. The "Third International" refers to the Communist International (or Comintern), which was founded by Lenin shortly after the victory of the Russian Revolution. But especially during the time when it was led by Stalin, from the mid-1920s until it was dissolved at the time of World War 2, the Comintern was increasingly marked by a mechanical approach to analyzing the world situation, which essentially saw capitalism as caught in a continuing crisis that was always worsening or about to worsen. For more on this, see the book *America in Decline* by Raymond Lotta (Banner Press, 1984) and the RCP's *Notes on Political Economy: Our Analysis of the 1980s*,

Issues of Methodology, and the Current Situation (RCP Publications, 2000).

4. The full title of the document is "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002."

5. The full title of the book is *The Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, by James Mann.

6. A reference to this is in a previous excerpt, "The Coming Civil War and Repolarization for Revolution in the Present Era," which appeared in *RW* #1274, April 10, 2005. In that excerpt Bob Avakian says: "In speaking to 'a coming civil war' I am 'drawing inspiration' from Newt Gingrich (the prominent Republican politician who was formerly the Speaker of the House of Representatives), who has made the observation that what's happening now in the electoral arena and the broader things that it reflects in U.S. society is analogous to what was going on in the U.S. in the 1840s and the 1850s, and that this isn't something that will—I'm paraphrasing, but this is the essence—this isn't something that will go away. It will only be decided when one side or the other wins out."

7. *Preaching from a Pulpit of Bones: We Need Morality But Not Traditional Morality*, Banner Press, 1999.

8. "The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy. And Why Clinton and the Democrats Are No Answer" was reprinted in *RW* #1255 (Oct. 17, 2004) and is available online at revcom.us.

9. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal program was enacted in the 1930s to save U.S. capitalism in the depths of the depression by carrying out a series of reforms. Among them was the enactment of Social Security, unemployment insurance, and laws legalizing trade unions and creating the modern system of collective bargaining. The New Deal formed the basis for a modern "social compact" or "consensus" where working people were led to accept the framework of capitalism in exchange for a promise of a social net that softened the extremes of the system.

10. President Lyndon Baines Johnson's Great Society programs were enacted in the midst of the upheavals of the 1960s. It was a series of domestic reform initiatives including civil rights legislation, creation of Medicaid/Medicare government health insurance and general talk of a "war on poverty."

11. Excerpts from *Great Objectives & Grand Strategy* appeared in the *RW* from November 2001 to March 2002 and are online at revcom.us.

A WAY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON: THE TWO PATS, AND ANDREW SULLIVAN ...AND CORNEL WEST

I can get at the point I want to make here more or less with the formulation: "The Two Pats and Andrew Sullivan...and Cornel West." I'll explain what I mean by that, as I go along.

Let's take the Bush circle. First of all, there is this Christian Fascist element in it. In reading that Esther Kaplan book (*With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*), you can really see this: Kaplan examines and amplifies further how deeply this has spread—and is being spread even as we speak—through the different agencies and institutions of the ruling structures of society. This is very real, it's very far along and it's very deep. On the other hand, what has actually been driving the foreign policy, or the international dimension, of the Bush regime? It has been not so much the Christian Fascists but this "neocon" ("neo-conservative") bunch. A number of them are Jewish, for one thing, and therefore they are not *Christian* Fascists, although there is this whole Book of Revelation thing with Israel—that the existence of the state of Israel is a pre-condition for the second coming of the Christian Lord. There is what some people call (I think Kaplan calls them this) "Christian Zionists"—Christian fundamentalists who are the most ardent defenders of Israel, at this point—until the time comes for the Jews to convert to Christianity! But right now, the Christian fundamentalists are the most ardent defenders of Israel; there is no one who is a more fanatical defender of Israel—and even "the greater Israel"—than these Christian Fascists. ("Greater Israel" refers to territory supposedly guaranteed to Israel by god, beyond just the present boundaries of the state of Israel.) There is no one more opposed to making concessions in the occupied territories than the Christian Fascists, based on their interpretation of "Revelation."¹

As for the Wolfowitzes and people like him (this

refers to Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary in the Department of Defense, and a major policy maker, particularly with regard to foreign policy and war, in the Bush regime) many of them are Jewish but most—or certainly many—of them are secular, actually, from what one can tell. And they are, in any case, not motivated by a religious fundamentalism. If you read *The Rise of the Vulcans* (a book by James Mann), a lot of them are, as someone referred to, "Straussians" ideologically. (This refers to Leo Strauss, a conservative thinker who has had a lot of influence among people in the Bush administration and similar types.) I haven't really studied Strauss, so I'll make that proviso and caveat right off the bat. But, from what I understand from reading *The Rise of the Vulcans*, and a few other things, there is an element ideologically, in terms of opposition to relativism and the promotion of absolutism, which is part of Straussian thought too—as well as Christian Fascist fundamentalism. And that overlaps with but is not by any means identical to—and in some ways is in contradiction to—the Christian Fascist form of absolutism and Christian Fascist ideology generally.

So, right now, in the persona of not only Bush but Cheney, and the Bush-Cheney combo, these things are being held together, so to speak. And right now their unity and identity is much greater than their opposition. But they are not identical, not the same. So that's one thing to understand. The dynamics are more complex than that. Pat Buchanan comes up here, in that I've given him credit previously for being far-seeing. He's not the only one, but he was prescient, we should give him credit [*BA laughs*]. He started writing his book *The Death of the West* before, and then finished writing it after, September 11, 2001, and he commented, in the part of that book written after September 11: There is all this national unity right now (right after the events of September 11) but it is not going to last; there are deep social and

cultural and other divides in this society, and they are going to reassert themselves.

And he was right—U.S. society did repolarize very sharply. I raised this also in connection with a point that I made in “New Situation/Great Challenges”² where it talks about how the Christian Fascist element was the driving element in the Clinton impeachment thing, but then after September 11 it was enveloped within this larger juggernaut while still remaining a core and driving force within it. And I think this speaks to the point that a comrade in our Party raised about the shifting of this from time to time and how different elements of this whole package—which we can, for shorthand, characterize as the Bush-Cheney package—may be at the forefront at different times. Cheney is not a Christian fascist—I don’t know if he’s really a Christian or not, but that’s not his particular thing, Christian Fascism—although, in his own way, he’s certainly a diehard reactionary. Edwards did bring out a few things that illustrate this in that one debate, the Vice Presidential debate: how reactionary Cheney has been, and how proud he is of how reactionary he’s been. He voted against making Martin Luther King’s birthday a holiday, he voted against a resolution calling for the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in South Africa—these are a few things Edwards brought out. Cheney has a whole record along these lines, of which he is very proud. It can’t help but dovetail and overlap with the Christian Fascist program, including on things near and dear to their hearts, but it’s not the same. There is the particularity of Cheney’s daughter (who is openly a lesbian), but more generally the position Cheney has voiced on the question of homosexuality is not the same as the Christian Fascist position. And Cheney articulates his position on that, in part at least, because there are some people whom the Republican Party and that general section of the ruling class want to appeal to who don’t share the views of the Christian Fascists on gay marriage (or on homosexuality more broadly) and on questions like abortion.

There is this tension, and different aspects of this program can come more to the fore or recede more to the background depending on what’s happening in the world. But the Christian Fascist element has its own dynamic within this, which is not absolutely identical to the “neocon” (“neo-conservative”) program and the international strategy embodied in that National Security document of 2002.³ Condoleezza Rice is a Christian daughter of a minister, but I don’t know that she’s a Christian Fascist exactly. So, it is more complex, and we have to understand the dynamics. But the reason I raise Pat Buchanan is because what has happened is that as that repolarization that he (Buchanan) spoke of re-emerged, and as the “war on terror” took what to many people appeared to be a “detour” into Iraq, that brought

out, or brought to the fore, more opposition to the Iraq war. This was Kerry’s position, of a sort—that Iraq was a “detour” from the “war on terror”—although Kerry definitely took the stand that, “now that we are into this war in Iraq, we have to win it...and I can do that better than Bush.” In actuality, Iraq is not a “detour.” It’s part of a larger strategy. But if you buy the line about the “war on terror”—that somehow this is really what Bush and company are waging, or should be waging—then perhaps the war against Iraq doesn’t make sense. And that’s partly why the repolarization has asserted itself too, because a lot of people, including some people who should have known better, took the position, if not of supporting at least of standing aside from and not opposing, the war in Afghanistan, because they bought into the propaganda that this was waged as a justified and necessary response to the September 11 attacks, even though in reality the war in Afghanistan, too, was part of the whole strategy of more aggressively asserting U.S. imperial rule around the world, and more forcefully recasting the world under U.S. imperial domination—a strategy that was formulated *well before* September 11. But with Iraq, it was more clear how that war was not in line with the proclaimed rationalizations for the “war on terror.”

The point is that part of the reason this repolarization reasserted itself so quickly and so strongly is that the contradiction between the appearance of a “war on terror” and the essence of a war to expand and refortify empire asserted itself very powerfully around Iraq. But then there comes the Andrew Sullivan point, which is cited in “Right-Wing Conspiracy,”⁴ where Sullivan, himself an avowed “conservative” and admirer of Ronald Reagan, makes the point that even “fiscal conservatives” (referring to people who favor cutting taxes and keeping government spending down for social programs, etc.)—even, if they aren’t particularly religious, they have to wrap up what they are fighting for in the terminology of social conservatism and essentially merge it with this Christian Fascist thrust. They can’t get over within the Republican Party, for example, simply by arguing for fiscal conservatism—and in fact, fiscal conservatism is out the window with this Bush regime. This has got a lot of these traditional libertarian types very upset; they’re writing books, too—not just Buchanan, other people are writing books, criticizing Bush for, among other things, his government spending and the huge deficit that has been piling up under his regime. Buchanan has a new book, *Where the Right Went Wrong*, and these other people are writing books about the betrayal by Bush of the conservative cause.

So that touches on something very real about the Christian Fascist phenomenon, which is that it’s not the

sum total, even of the Bush-Cheney regime. And one should not fall into reductionism and try to explain everything that's happening in the world, including the major move they are making for unchallenged world domination, by looking through the prism of Christian Fascism. What you definitely do get is Christian Fascist rationalizations for this drive for world domination—that is a very significant phenomenon in ruling class politics these days.

But there is not an identity in all this, and it is not even that the strategically operative program for what they are doing in the world right now is flowing out of Christian Fascism, but actually more out of the “neocon” people, many of whom were “Rooseveltian Democrats” who don't believe in a small state or a small government. And they don't believe in using the state just “for national defense” in some more traditional sense—even though that always meant imperialism. Rather, these “neocons” insist on an aggressive imperialist expansion in the world. These are people who are on mission for “democratization” in the world—in other words, for reshaping the world in the image of the U.S., even reshaping certain countries with some of the outer forms of rule as it takes shape in the U.S.—elections, and so on and so forth.

For example, Christopher Hitchens was on Amy Goodman's program *Democracy Now* not long ago. She asked him, “Have you become a ‘neocon’?—you seem to be supporting these neocons.” He answered, “Well, I'm supporting people like Wolfowitz.” And—I've heard this on other occasions, for example in debates where Hitchens has taken part—he went on to argue that Wolfowitz is different than Henry Kissinger: Kissinger said we should support any despot in order to pursue our interests, but Wolfowitz thinks we should bring in democracy and not support despots. I have seen where Hitchens has made that point in debates, and he repeated that basic point on Amy Goodman's show, and then he cited the Philippines as an example of where Wolfowitz took the position that we should not keep supporting Marcos (the brutal pro-imperialist dictator in the Philippines, in the 1970s and up until the mid-1980s). And Hitchens cited *The Rise of the Vulcans* as a source for this view of Wolfowitz. Well, I've been reading *The Rise of the Vulcans*, so I went to the book to confirm my sense of this, and then said to myself, “Somebody should send an e-mail to Amy Goodman pointing out: ‘Even the guy (James Mann) who wrote *The Rise of the Vulcans* says that Wolfowitz was *late* in coming to this position—he hung with Marcos for a long time. So, sorry Christopher, even on that count you can't get over. You can't slide even on that point.’” Even though we have our differences, politically and ideologically, with Amy Goodman, she does a lot of very important exposure, and we should

be helping people like her politically combat hackish apologists for this imperialist juggernaut, like Hitchens, and expose their hypocrisy even more fully. That's all a part of what we needed to be doing.

These people (the “neocons”) are on a mission for their own view of democracy—but, of course, they do the “Kissinger” thing too. In all these Central Asian republics where U.S. military forces are setting up bases—those are not democracies [*B.A. laughs*—by the “neocons” own account, they are brutal bourgeois dictatorships...openly brutal dictatorships, by anybody's account. But, nevertheless, ideologically there is sort of a crusading missionary zeal here of “spreading democracy in the world,” of which Wolfowitz, in particular, is an architect.

And this is causing a lot of conflicts. Buchanan, as well as “Anonymous” (the long-time CIA operative who is the author of the book *Imperial Hubris*) and other people, are saying, in essence: “What the fuck is this ‘democratizing mission’—what does this have to do with our interests as imperialists?!” Buchanan is arguing that the U.S. should be “a republic not an empire,” even though he's all for imperialism as long as it is “in the national interests”—as he sees those interests. But Buchanan insists, in effect: “This zeal to spread democracy around the world is going to land us in a big shitload of trouble.” That's also the argument of “Anonymous,” and other significant ruling class figures are putting this forward as well.

So, it's not all Christian Fascism that is driving things, particularly in the international arena, but there is “the Andrew Sullivan point”—or two points in this connection: First, you cannot get things through, so to speak, within the Republican Party in particular—which *is* the ruling party now—you cannot get things through without some accommodation, at a minimum, to the Christian Fascist forces and program. That's the point of Sullivan's emphasizing that even “fiscal conservatives” have to wrap their program up in a “social conservatism” and Christian Fascism package in some form or other. And, while he was saying that a few years ago, in the context of what became the Clinton impeachment scandal, what he says about this is still true—it's very true right now. Even though the juggernaut of war and repression that was unleashed fully after September 11, 2001, has sort of “enveloped” this Christian Fascism within a broader package, Christian Fascism has remained at the core within all this and, even if you aren't actually a Christian Fascist yourself, it is still necessary to accommodate to that to get things done within the current regime.

That's one point. The second point is something else we've been stressing: Christian Fascism—the Christian Fascist element, within the ruling class and more broadly in society—is a powerful force in its own right, and

it's not going away. Very much related to the fact that it's not identical with the whole Republican Party, it's not going to simply tail in the wake of these other programs within that Party. It has its own dynamic, while it overlaps with other "conservative" programs. Presently there's overwhelming unity between these programs, but not complete unity, and the differences are there also. I made the point in the talk "Elections, Democracy and Dictatorship, Resistance and Revolution" about how Al Gore says what he's saying—sharply criticizing Bush and even making some criticism of the Iraq war—and *why* he says it. He says this because he's *not* running for president. At the same time, you've got Schwarzenegger in California, who's supporting funding for stem cell research, and he's not for gay marriage but he's not a virulently anti-gay person either, and he's pro-choice. But, if he runs for president, you'll hear a different tune—if he wants to be the Republican nominee for president—just like Bush the senior was pro-choice until he ran for president on the Republican ticket, or got associated with Reagan (as Reagan's vice presidential running mate) even before that.

These are the dynamics. Certainly at this point, I don't think it's possible to get the nomination of the Republican Party for president and be pro-choice. They'll talk about how they have pro-choice elements in their party when it's convenient for them to say that. But I don't believe that at this point you can get the nomination of the Republican Party and be pro-choice.

Is it possible that there could be a reconfiguration within the ruling class in which the Christian Fascists would actually be smashed? Yes, that is at least theoretically possible—they could be smashed, or pushed back significantly. Gingrich's point can be understood just in terms of conflicts within the ruling class, although I think it would be very difficult to confine such conflicts within those terms ultimately. (This refers to Newt Gingrich's comparison of the present period in the U.S. to the 1840s and 1850s, the decades in which the conflicts that eventually led to the Civil War, in the 1860s, were sharpening.) In other words, there could be a reconfiguration within the ruling class in which what is represented by the Christian Fascists—and, more generally, what is represented by the "conservatives" (including Gingrich)—takes a real blow and some other program comes to the fore. That's what some of these billionaire Democrats are aiming for. (This refers to a group of very wealthy Democratic Party backers who are talking about taking up, from their side, the strategy of the "conservatives" in the Republican Party: aiming to build up institutions, etc., that would be parallel to, and oppose—within the framework of mainstream bourgeois poli-

tics—the institutions built up over decades by right-wing forces.) But is this likely to be achieved, in the immediate context at least? I don't think so. There may well be attempts at that. But it would take a major struggle in the ruling class, with someone coming up with a whole different coherent program, and actually aggressively going after these right-wing forces, for that to happen. And I think you can look around, and look at the dynamics in the society and in the world, and think that's not very likely. Not impossible, but not very likely.

But let me put it this way: No other ruling class program is going to win out which doesn't, at a minimum, deliver a heavy political defeat to Christian Fascism. You're not going to do it in the way that some key forces within the Democratic Party are talking about—being "Christian Fascist lite," or whatever. That's just grist to the mill of the Christian Fascists, and the "conservatives" generally. The author of *The Rise of the Vulcans* makes a provocative point, which I think is really worth thinking about. Toward the end of the book, he argues that in this period—he's talking about what we mean by "period of major transition with the potential for great upheaval," what's been set in motion as a result of the resolution of the Cold War—both the Democrats and the Republicans have a broad unity in terms of the further globalization of the economy and the military power to back that up. He uses a musical metaphor: They're both playing the same tune, but, as he puts it, "When Democrats held the White House, they turned up the economic treble. When the Republicans took over, they turned up the military bass." (*The Rise of the Vulcans*, p. 215)

And then he makes a further comment, which I do believe speaks to what was a significant factor in the recent election, besides the Christian Fascist element. He characterizes it this way (you know how they put these things—they put it off on the people, they don't present things in terms of how the ruling class controls and shapes these politics): When the American people perceive that the war aspect of this has come to the fore, he says, they will vote mainly for the Republicans, because they believe the Republicans are more resolute and consistent about being hawks, basically, and the Democrats really can't convince people, in this day and age, that they are just as good at waging war. The Democrats were able to do this back in the day of LBJ and all that, but nowadays they cannot really do it. Why? Because of the configuration of things in society, because (this is a point that's made in the "Pyramid" article⁵) the Democratic Party does have this contradiction in its ranks, which came out at its convention and explains the Howard Dean phenomenon, that its base, or a large part of it, doesn't support these wars, doesn't want to live in the new Rome, and therefore you can't convince people that you're going to be as resolute as the Republicans in wag-

ing war, no matter how many times Kerry says “reporting for duty” and “I’ll be a better commander-in-chief and I’ll kill the terrorists.”

By the way, people have pointed out what a remarkable election it is when a candidate running for President of the United States gets up and says, “I’m going to track down and kill” people. Kerry didn’t just say, “I’m going to wage a war”—that’s one thing—but he said, “I’m going to track down and kill” people. Someone who is seeking to be the president, the head of state, of a country like this one, said: “I’m going to go around the world and track down and kill people.” And this is the “good guy” in the election, right?—the candidate that many peace forces rallied behind, in any case. [B.A. laughs] Yet and still, the point is that it’s a hard sell—not that you cannot do it, but it’s a hard sell—to convince people that the Democrats will be better as the war party, under the present circumstances and the present configuration in American society and politics. And it’s certainly a hard sell to convince them you will be the better religious party. It just doesn’t conform to what people know is the reality. So that’s not the way the Christian Fascists are going to get defeated, even within the confines of ruling class politics.

Which gets to the Cornel West point. Cornel West, in his book *Democracy Matters* (his latest book) has this argument about “Constantinian Christianity.” He says he himself is an evangelical Christian but not a Constantinian Christian. What he means by that is Christianity as an instrument of the state and of imperial policy—Christianity in the mode of Constantine (a ruler in the Roman Empire, in the 4th century, who adopted Christianity, fought battles under the banner of Christianity, and dictated to the Church a lot of Christian doctrine). A lot of people use the Roman Empire metaphor these days, and it’s very apt in a lot of ways. So Cornel West is talking about Christianity as an instrument of state power and of imperial power when he speaks of “Constantinian Christianity.” But I think he misses something important here, because he is an evangelical Christian himself, at the same time as he describes himself sometimes as a “Gramscian Marxist” (referring to the ideas of Antonio Gramsci, a somewhat “unorthodox” Italian Marxist in the first part of the 20th century). Perhaps Cornel West does not see the real danger, or at least the full danger, posed by the fundamentalist Christian Fascist element in all this—he only sees the negative aspect in the “Constantinian” element, which is very real and very significant but I don’t think he fully appreciates the great danger of Christian fundamentalism as such.

And this finally brings me around to the other Pat—Pat Robertson. Pat Robertson represents in a real sense

the *merging* of fundamentalist and Constantinian Christianity. He is a high level political operative of the imperialist system who is at one and the same time a genuine nut case—a fundamentalist religious fanatic—and a Constantinian Christian.

But it is still the case that the interests of these different ruling class factions don’t run absolutely together: Christian Fascism and *Imperial Hubris*, if you will, don’t run smoothly together; nor does the “neocon” mission for “democratizing the world” fit so well with the position of people like Buchanan as well as the author of *Imperial Hubris*. There is this basic point: These days you cannot get anywhere in the configuration of ruling class politics, and in particular Republican Party politics, without at least accommodating yourself to the Christian Fascist element. At the same time, I believe it is the case that the whole thrust of what they are doing in the world, as embodied for example, in that National Security document of 2002, is not proceeding primarily from the dynamic of Christian Fascism. But even in the international dimension, let alone in the U.S. itself, you cannot push things through and carry them out, without at least accommodating to the Christian Fascist program. And, again, Christian Fascism is a real force in its own right, it has its own dynamic, within the ruling class and within society broadly. As Esther Kaplan points out in *With God on Their Side*, Christian Fascism is becoming deeply entrenched and suffused, widely spread, throughout the ruling institutions and agencies of government and the state. It is beginning to affect every sphere, and it is seeking to “close the circle” of institutions inside and outside government—and at some point that distinction (inside and outside of government) could be obliterated, and Christian Fascist institutions could become *the* institutions of state and government.

Now, some people will say that’s crazy. How can you have science, how can you do NASA, how can you keep the population from becoming sick and dying if you interfere with science and medicine in this kind of way? But that’s the “not a perfect fit” point. (This refers to the discussion, following the talk *Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism*, about whether the Christian Fascist program is a “perfect fit” with the interests of the ruling class as a whole at this point.⁶) This is an extremely volatile, unstable compound, so to speak, but that doesn’t mean that it couldn’t come to pass (to use Biblical terms) that theocratic rule by Christian Fascists would be the form in which bourgeois dictatorship would be exercised in the U.S. These are the dynamics, and we have to understand them more fully.

I do believe this Christian Fascism element, in and

of itself, is the leading and essential aspect of this. Yes, the whole imperial extension could become over-extension and could get them in trouble, and that could be the form in which everything gets called into question, and even a revolutionary situation arises. But I still think that what is unrelenting in this, in the most concentrated way, is this Christian Fascist element. It is both, at one and the same time, unrelenting *and* a fundamental challenge to and opposition to the consensus that's ruled this country in one form or another throughout its history.

This has always been a religious country, but it's always essentially had a secular government. That's a sometimes acute contradiction—which now is becoming extremely acute. Separation of church and state, abortion, the homosexuality question—but, beyond that, science, education—everything is being brought into the sights of the Christian Fascists, not just in a theoretical way but in a practical way now, and in an increasing way, and it probably will be in a geometrically increasing way in the period ahead.

At the same time, once again, this is enveloped in a larger juggernaut at this point, while not being identical to that larger juggernaut. These, I believe, are the dynamics within the ruling class, and also within the society and the world in the larger sense.

Remember that movie with Jeff Bridges (as the President), *The Contender*, with Joan Allen (as the Vice President)? Remember when she comes under fire and she goes to a Congressional hearing and says, "My chapel is the chapel of democracy." Remember that? Well, that's the "religion" of many secular bourgeois democrats—a "religion" which is being upended and challenged by this Christian Fascism. When those fundamental things get called into question and challenged in this way, then, for one, people who "hold those things dear" will rally to the defense of those things; but, at the same time—this is the way these dynamics work—many of them will also open up to big questions, even about those assumptions. That's what we're seeing in microcosm, and on even on a bigger scale, in some of our own work and more largely in the society. This is what you see. Somebody, a force of Christian fundamentalist fanatics and other fascists, is coming to destroy that "chapel" of democracy—which is ultimately and fundamentally *bourgeois democracy*. Yes, many want to still keep worshipping there, but all this makes you question your beliefs, especially if something is brought forward with a *different synthesis*, which can resonate with you. This is one of the big challenges we face—to really bring forward that radically different synthesis in a living way.

This situation could recede or change significantly, while still remaining within the confines of bourgeois politics and bourgeois rule. Things are not set in stone: dynamics could emerge that are larger than whatever is

happening at a given time—that's the point about unexpected, unanticipated, and in some ways "unanticipatable" events—and even what we can look at and anticipate now could shift the terms of this. But none of this is going to get shifted, even within ruling class parameters, without a wrenching process and struggle. And I don't believe that can actually go on without all of society getting drawn into it. And certainly we don't want that to go on without all of society getting drawn into it.

And then there's the question of what comes out of all of it. That is not pre-set.

So, those are some thoughts that I wanted to lay out, because this is extremely important for us to understand, in a scientific, dialectical materialist way—to understand, as best we can, the dynamics and have the best possible method and approach for digging further into these dynamics and grasping them more fully, in all their complexity as well as in their essence, in order to wage the struggle to radically transform things in a positive way.

NOTES:

1. The "occupied territories" refers to the areas outside of the formal boundaries of the state of Israel which are occupied and controlled by the Israeli military.

2. "The New Situation and the Great Challenges" by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP,USA, *Revolutionary Worker* #1143, March 17, 2002, available online at revcom.us

3. The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, available on the web at www.whitehouse.gov.

4. See "The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy ...And Why Clinton and the Democrats Are No Answer" (*RW* #1255, October 17, 2004).

5. Bob Avakian, "The Pyramid of Power and the Struggle to Turn This Whole Thing Upside Down," *RW* No. 1237 (April 25, 2004).

6. See "The Enemy's Solid Core," *RW* #1261 (December 12, 2004).

BUSH I...BUSH II...AND THINGS GOING TO EXTREMES

An irony for all these progressives who got into the recent (2004) election and supported Kerry—and Thomas Friedman (a major commentator for the ruling class) had the virtue of saying this explicitly—is that they were basically supporting Bush, the papa, against Bush, junior. That’s what they were doing by voting for Kerry. Objectively, it came down to: they were supporting Bush I against Bush II. If you reduce things to the talk about “multilateralism,” and so on, if that’s what your critique of the Iraq war has been reduced to—criticizing Bush for “not involving more allies,” in that war—so much for your “progressivism.” Anyway, for people who consider themselves progressives but got into this Kerry thing, they need a good hard look in the mirror. Even Ralph Nader said, “My god, you people all gave in [to Kerry and the Democrats] without demanding anything.” That was his answer to the people who attacked him—progressives who attacked Nader for running again—“you people gave in without demanding anything—that’s shameful, disgraceful.” And he has a point, within the framework of how these people are arguing. Anyway, that’s just something to think about.

The main point is this: If you take the statement by Newt Gingrich (a “conservative” Republican and former Speaker of the House of Representatives), comparing the present situation in the U.S. to that in the period before the Civil War in the middle of the 19th century, what I’m arguing is that even if these imperialists don’t get overextended internationally, in a really dramatic way and get into a whole disaster, this Christian Fascism thing could—not automatically will but could—play the role of “stage manager” for revolution, if we do our work correctly, not only in opposition to Christian Fascism but in relation to the situation and its development as a whole. Of course, we did not choose to have—and we would greatly prefer not to have—this whole Christian Fascist phenomenon. But that is not up to us—it is not of

our doing, and not of our choosing. That’s why (in some other remarks) I made the analogy to Japan invading China and Mao’s comment about how, as terrible as that was—and he was very acutely aware of how terrible it was and how it greatly increased the suffering of the masses of Chinese people—this invasion constituted a kind of “pivotal event,” or represented a kind of “stage manager role,” in relation to the revolution in China and its ultimate success in not only driving out Japanese imperialism but liberating China entirely from imperialist and reactionary rule. With that understanding, and in that spirit, this is an analogy I’m drawing to the role of Christian Fascism in the U.S. today.

Yes, things could intervene to change this—you can’t be determinist, and our approach to very serious things shouldn’t be gimmicky—but I do think this Christian Fascist phenomenon is changing things and setting in motion a definite dynamic, which is part of a larger dynamic in the world, so it could be subsumed under or altered by or shoved aside temporarily or mitigated by other contradictions and dynamics. But it is introducing a definite dynamic—and the point of the Gingrich statement is that all this doesn’t have a resolution short of something very radical.

I don’t think everybody is just alarmist who is saying this. Of course, everybody knows we’re alarmist [*B.A. laughs*], but there are other people out there saying this. To be serious, there is an alarmism you have to guard against, which is a form of instrumentalism: “If we can just scare people enough, then they will rally to our banner.” That’s what we’re accused of, and we should not fall into that. We should make scientific analyses, not instrumentalist analyses like, “Oh good, now I can see a way we can swing people to our side.” We shouldn’t get into that kind of approach of: “let’s look for something that can scare people enough that they will rally to us.” But the point is, this is real what’s happening. It’s not

accidental that some people are saying that this is like the period between the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor and the Reichstag fire (an event in Germany—the burning down of the parliament, or Reichstag, structures—which was used by the Nazis to consolidate power and outlaw and suppress opposition). It may not be exactly analogous, things may not work out exactly that way (leaving aside the limitations with all analogies), but it's not accidental, it's not out of nowhere, it's not because people are crazy or just merely being instrumentalist themselves in trying to get other people to oppose this.

There is something real here, and what I'm arguing is that, yes, the international dimension is ultimately decisive for everything—it is fundamentally and ultimately determining of what takes place in any, and every, country—but we shouldn't be mechanical and reductionist about that either. Things can develop their own dynamics, which doesn't have to be what's happening in the world at large—or, more specifically, what's happening with Bush and the imperialists' overall international crusade. Those things will have a major effect on how the polarization occurs within the U.S., and in how we can and must work to achieve a repolarization, but that's not the only way that things can get posed in very extreme terms. I'm saying something different than “only if they get overextended could we possibly have the emergence of a full legitimacy crisis and even possibly a revolutionary crisis.” I'm not selling anybody promises, I'm just trying to analyze the world.

It is part of our “job,” part of our responsibility, to try to see where the openings for revolution might come from, without inventing them. We should really guard against instrumentalism and “concocting fashionable means” of struggle and “looking for loopholes” in the wrong sense—where they don't really exist. But, with the correct scientific method, it is our responsibility to look for where openings might come and where they might be emerging. And, from that perspective, I believe there is a certain thing happening here which is very unfavorable right now, but which holds the potential (that's the analogy to the Japanese invasion) for us to transform it into something else, maybe even all the way into a revolution. Now, again, we should learn from past errors in the direction of being mechanical and not engaging reality in a thorough enough way, in all its complexity and contradictoriness, to say nothing of approaching reality with preconceived notions, or formulas, and instrumentalist methods. We should learn from the epistemological ruptures we are making and really make them thoroughly.¹ Things may turn out another way, besides a full-blown crisis and possibly

even a revolution—it may turn out horribly or it may get mitigated. Let's not go out to people with a simple-minded vulgarization of reality—that doesn't do anybody any good. But, on the other hand, I believe there is a certain development here that is leading toward an extreme resolution, one way or the other. I don't believe these arguments are purely hyperbole, for instrumentalist purposes, by the Gingriches, or whatever.

It is a little bit like the Yao Wen-yuan statement—this was attributed to him after the “gang of four” were defeated, but it sounds real to me—about how, “We've had struggles of all different kinds, we've had the Cultural Revolution, and we've tried to resolve this in other forms, so why can't we cut off some heads?” [Yao Wen-yuan was one of the “gang of four” who were upholding Mao's line after his death in 1976 and were arrested as the first and decisive step in the coup that led to the restoration of capitalism in China under Deng Xiaoping.] This is what Yao Wen-yuan was reputed to have said before his head effectively got cut off politically. And apparently the other side, led by Deng Xiaoping, had the same logic—only they had more going for them. That's somewhat the problem we're facing here and now [*B.A. laughs*]. It's not literally a question of cutting off heads, that's a metaphor—at least I'm using it as a metaphor—what I'm speaking to is the situation where forces in society with very different outlooks and programs are increasingly in antagonistic opposition to each other and this can only be ultimately resolved with one of them winning out and decisively defeating the other. This very much relates to the Gingrich statement about how things are shaping up in this period in the U.S.: things are not going to get resolved other than through one side crushing the other, is essentially what Gingrich is saying.

Right now the sides are not the way we need them to be—but neither were they when Japan invaded China. The point is to recognize what the dynamic is, and what the potential is for resolution, one way or the other.

Yes, if the international situation goes one way it will affect that adversely for us, and if it goes another way it will, at least potentially, make it more favorable for us. We don't see eye to eye with the people who may be progressive in a general sense but, on their own and spontaneously, are fearful of the prospect of revolution. It's not that we like extremes for their own sake, any more than Mao liked the mass slaughters and rapes carried out by the Japanese when they invaded and occupied China. But this is part of reality we have to confront: If things don't go to extremes, they can't get resolved, and the horrors will continue, and get worse. That's the point of *A Horrible End, or an End to the Horror*²: This world is horrible for the great majority of humanity, and for large sections of this society, all the time, even if they put

up with it much of the time. As Lenin said, people “uncomplainingly” allow themselves to be robbed in “normal times.” That doesn’t mean they’re not being robbed, and it doesn’t mean it’s not horrible—certainly for the majority of humanity it is horrible. That’s why we are willing to see things go to extremes—and, specifically, the “extreme” of revolution. But, in order to make revolution, we also have to understand that there will be forces, particularly among the middle strata, with whom we have to work, and carry out a process of unity-struggle-unity, who are going to try desperately to find every other solution before they will embrace revolution. They will even do things that amount to supporting the essence of Bush I against Bush II, in the embodiment of Kerry—and other things that keep presenting themselves as illusory solutions—before they become convinced, through the development of the objective situation and our work, correctly carried out, that revolution really is both necessary and in fact desirable.

Now, it is a fact—and this is examined in the book by Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*—that revolutions don’t usually develop with the most resolute and determined revolutionaries coming to the fore right away. In many cases at least, revolutions are made by, or initiated by, people who don’t intend to have it go to a revolution. They get “Gorbacheved”—they think they’re setting in motion one dynamic, and they end up with another: The dynamic that they’re both taking initiative to set in motion and that they are, on another level, an expression of, can’t be resolved, or in any case doesn’t get resolved—not to be determinist about it, but it doesn’t get resolved short of something beyond what they may have wanted. This is what happened with Gorbachev—he didn’t set out to dissolve the Soviet Union, but that is what resulted from what he set in motion. And, in certain circumstances, this is what happens to “moderates” who set in motion a process that leads to a revolution they may well not have expected, or even wanted.

This is the way we have to understand things. We do have to break away from “structural determinism”—seeing the basic structure, or underlying foundation, of things as determining events in a mechanical sense, and not understanding the relative independence of the superstructure (ideology and politics, the actions of individuals, and so on). These are erroneous tendencies we have fallen into before, and we should learn from that. Human beings are thinking, conscious beings, who are acting within a certain underlying material framework, but they’re not simply slaves to objective conditions. This applies to representatives of the bourgeoisie as well as of the proletariat. People can transform objective conditions, too—they have will and initiative. That’s what

Engels said in that letter he wrote (to Bloch) near the end of his life: We (Engels and Marx) had to put so much emphasis on the underlying material factors, and we didn’t really talk a lot about the superstructural factors. That’s what Engels said, in essence: We did not give enough emphasis to those superstructural factors.

We have to start thinking in these kinds of ways, in our methodology generally, but in particular I’m arguing for a certain thing here. Not because I like the polarization that is currently taking shape, but because I do believe it is our responsibility to see where openings for radically transforming things might be coming from. And, in any case, we certainly have to recognize what a very bad polarization can lead to, if we don’t act on it.

If Kerry had been elected, there would have been a different dynamic. And I will say that I agonized for quite a while over whether, in this particular situation, it might be better if, in fact, Kerry did win—or, more to the point, if Bush lost the election. I came to the conclusion that this was not the case, but I agonized over this for quite a while, and from many different angles, before coming to that conclusion—and I will say that, if you were not agonizing over that, you weren’t doing what a communist is supposed to be doing. But, at the end of all that agonizing, I came to the conclusion that the election of Kerry would not have been better—there would have been a different dynamic, but not one that was better (or worse).

I had some discussion with another comrade and they kept coming back to this point: “Would it be objectively better if Kerry got elected? I know we shouldn’t say so, but would it be objectively better if Kerry got elected?” And I answered: “If it would objectively be better, we should say so, and train the masses to think the right way. It’s not the case that it might be objectively better but we shouldn’t say so. If it would be objectively better, we should have determined that and said so and explained why, and trained the masses in communist tactics flowing from a communist analysis and methodology.” That was a very good discussion and struggle we had. That process had a lot to do with how I came to the position: “They [Kerry and Bush] are both worse”—which I think is a correct position. This relates to a point some comrades in our Party’s leadership have pointed out: If Kerry had gotten in office it would have been “Clinton times ten” (or “Clinton to the 10th power”) in terms of what would have been going on. Not only would Kerry have been, in essence, Bush I, but he would have been Bush I under extreme and intensifying pressure from Bush II (or the forces Bush II represents).

What is represented by the Christian Fascists is not isolated from the larger dynamics—within the ruling class, within U.S. society as a whole, and within the world overall—and we should understand the role of the other sections of the ruling class, both within the alliance that the Christian Fascists are now part of, and more broadly. What is represented by Brzezinski (former Secretary of State under President Jimmy Carter)? What is represented by Kerry? By Scowcroft (a official in the administration of Bush I)? And, for that matter, what is represented by Bush I himself? Kitty Kelley says, in her book (*The Family: The Real Story of the Bush Dynasty*), that Papa Bush went into a tirade at one point about what his son “W” is doing, particularly in regard to Iraq. I don’t know if that’s true or not, but it might be, there is a certain logic there in terms of what is happening in Iraq. But, in any case, Bush senior is there cheering on his son “W”—Bush I is not coming out in the public and saying “vote for Kerry.” The same thing with McCain. McCain hates Bush, for good reason and to a great depth, and he has more or less said so. When I saw him interviewed after the election, he more or less said so (or all but said so). But McCain also said, “I think Bush is a better Commander-in-Chief in time of war.” These are things we have to understand.

Anyway, I’m offering a certain thesis that relates to the Gingrich statement, the analogy to the Japanese invasion of China, the ladders of the pyramid collapsing³—I don’t mean that the whole pyramid is collapsing, but the way it’s configured, that’s not going to hold. The center not holding in the way it’s been holding, the effort to reconstitute a center (of capitalist class rule) on a different basis, and a rationalization and legitimation of that on a different basis—that is the process going on here. This is giving rise to a certain polarization now, which needs to be radically repolarized. And the point is that this might—not will for certain, but might—lead all the way to an opening for revolution, to the resolution of this in, yes, an extreme but at the same time a positive way, a revolutionary way, rather than in some reactionary and even fascist way. And this could happen through a direct clash with the fascists—against the attempt at the fascist resolution of this and the imposition of outright fascist rule. These may be the two poles that come to the fore. One of them, the negative extreme, can easily come to the fore “spontaneously”—through a process that is spontaneous from our standpoint. But the other one, the positive one, certainly won’t—it will require tremendous effort on our part, to wrench this positive revolutionary outcome out of this whole situation and its development toward extremes.

Needless to say, if there is a fascist resolution of all this, it will not be “Nach Hitler Uns” (a saying in German—“After Hitler Us”—a very mistaken orientation

fallen into by communists in Germany in the 1930s). Instead, it will in essence be: “Mit Hitler... Oh Shit!” (“with Hitler...oh shit!”) [B.A. laughs]. We’d better understand that, we better not allow that to be the resolution of it. We better change that by the work we do and the struggle we wage, by how we understand and act on reality.

NOTES:

1. See “Bob Avakian in a Discussion with Comrades on Epistemology—On Knowing and Changing the World,” *Revolutionary Worker* #1262 (December 19, 2004).
2. *A Horrible End, or an End to the Horror* is a book written by Bob Avakian (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1984).
3. See “The Center: Can It Hold...The Pyramid as Two Ladders,” another excerpt in this series, which was published in *Revolution* #4 (May 29, 2005).

There Is No “They” — But There is a Definite Direction to Things THE DYNAMICS WITHIN THE RULING CLASS, AND THE CHALLENGES FOR REVOLUTIONARIES

One thing we should understand: There is no “THEY”—no one single, undivided, “monolithic” group that rules society. That’s one thing we really have to understand. There are different “They’s” striving and struggling to be THEY—to be the dominant and determining force within the ruling class, and therefore within society. But there is no one “THEY.”

This is not *Moon Over Parador*—and even there the Dreyfuss character got out of hand. Remember the Richard Dreyfuss movie, *Moon Over Parador*, where his character was an actor doing a movie in a (fictional) Latin American country, and then he was brought in to imitate the dictator after the dictator had actually died. There were a tiny number of aristocratic families, of the Latin American oligarchy model, and they were running him—directing and controlling him in this role as dictator—and then he got off the leash at a certain point. That, of course, is an unrealistic scenario. After all, it’s a movie, it’s not real life—and in the real world there is not a single “THEY” sitting there deciding everything. Sometimes, some people, among those who recognize that there are financial interests that exercise a powerful role in society, can be very narrow and economist in their analysis (making a connection, too directly and mechanically, between powerful financial and economic interests, on the one hand, and political decision-making on the other hand). And we have fallen into errors like that at times ourselves. Sometimes it happens that things that are not most beneficial, economically, for the most powerful business interests get done by the government anyway—because, in the judgment of those who are making political decisions, those things are in the best interests of the system they serve (however they conceive of that system and those interests). There is a system that is operating—a system whose fundamental, underlying dynamics set the ultimate framework and terms for political decision-making—but it is not a “one-to-one” thing

between business and financial interests, on the one hand, and political decision-making, on the other hand. There is not a single, uniform “business class” deciding all this on the basis of its uniform business interests—there is not a THEY—there are political operatives who operate with relative autonomy. George Soros (whose assets are in the billions) is as big as “They” get, but there are a lot of different “THEYs.” Soros put a lot of money into the election—backing Kerry, trying to deny Bush a “mandate” with a second term—yet Soros couldn’t prevail.

You have to think in dynamic terms, even with regard to what goes on in the ruling structures and ruling circles. Yes, there *is* a ruling class. A ruling class is like a solid core—it has a lot of dynamism within it. It’s not a monolith, and that’s *especially* true these days. We have to really, in our conception, not fall into thinking in crude terms of some kind of “THEY.” Sometimes descriptions like that have a certain usefulness, as a kind of shorthand, but this is like a lot of “shorthands” in science and other things—it can also lead you into the wrong kind of thinking. There’s not one “THEY” sitting there doling out power to various people. Yes, I have made the analogy that when you run for office it’s like auditioning—auditioning for the ruling class, which holds the ultimate decision-making power—but that is a dynamic thing. It’s not literally that you have something like the Fox *American Idol* panel that sits there, going “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” for the different candidates. It’s much more dynamic than that. We can describe things metaphorically to help people understand important aspects of reality, but we shouldn’t vulgarize it to them—and we shouldn’t vulgarize it to ourselves. We should enable people to understand—and we ourselves must understand—the complexity of this.

There is right now a certain dynamic in terms of the politics and the contradictions within the ruling class,

and how that relates to the direction of society (and, to a very significant degree, the world) as a whole. This can be changed by what happens internationally—it could be changed by things that aren't under the control of the imperialists. The author (a long-time CIA operative) who wrote the book *Imperial Hubris*, he argues that it's inevitable that there will be another attack like September 11—and quite possibly an attack with weapons of mass destruction. What do you think that would do to the dynamics inside the U.S.?

That brings me to a key point in relation to all this: We are not, we must not be, passive in the face of this whole situation. We must work to bring about a radical change in the political terrain. This current dynamic is not good for us, not good for the revolutionary proletariat, not good for the oppressed people, not good for the masses of people, within the U.S. and throughout the world. And, if it continues on the trajectory it is on, it will get worse—and then, if the same kind of reactionary religious forces who were involved in the September 11 attacks launch another attack on the U.S., and especially if that attack is even more devastating, things will go to a whole other level, will be in a whole different ballpark. And, yes, things like this could lead to a situation where the imperialist rulers of the U.S. suffer a very serious setback as a result of being overextended internationally—but, if that occurs in a situation where the current dynamic has gone ahead on the trajectory it is now on, all this will most likely lead to a far *worse* situation than exists now. So, again, this emphasizes the great importance of working urgently to mobilize masses of people in political struggle *to make leaps in radically transforming* the political situation, the political terrain and the political terms, in a more positive direction.

Once Hitler consolidated power, it took a whole world war to bring him down, and then he was not brought down by any internal dynamics and struggle from within German society itself (even though there were assassination attempts against him by people in the German ruling class, after a certain point in World War 2, when things started going badly for Germany). Well, we don't want to be determinist and sit around and wait for something like that—you know what the next world war is going to be like if it comes. Who knows who is going to survive, if anybody does. There is still that question. There is not the Soviet Union anymore, but you can have weapons of mass destruction flying around without the Soviet Union, I'm sorry to say. I'm pointing to something that I think is a real, and very dangerous, dynamic here. But it can change—and, we must recognize, it can change to be even worse than it is now. Left to itself, it almost certainly will change in that way, in one form or

another.

And so, we have to get in there and change this. There is a dynamic at play which holds not only very negative and extremely dangerous possibilities but also potentially positive and favorable elements, and we have to seize on this and work on this to transform it into something entirely different. Right now, the positive side—that is, the opposition of various kinds to what is represented by the whole Bush agenda, for short—is just about entirely in the framework of bourgeois democracy. And the interests of the masses of people, in the U.S. and throughout the world, are not going to prevail if things stay in that framework, if the positive side of the polarization is largely left at that and defined by that. There will be many elements of that kind of opposition—resistance that has not yet broken out of the framework of bourgeois democracy, fundamentally—if things are repolarized to a more favorable configuration. And this will be true, in a certain sense, even if things are repolarized all the way to a revolutionary situation. But if things are left as they are now, politically, with the polarization essentially being what is represented by Bush, on one side, and simply bourgeois-democratic opposition (of various kinds) on the other side, good things are not going to result, and the real interests of the masses of people are not going to win out.

There are many people who are being forced to confront the world they're being dragged into as a result of the current dynamic—they're staring it in the face now. And what the dominant core of the ruling class (grouped around Bush, in basic terms) is aiming for is a reforging of a consensus that is definitely different than what Clinton was aiming to do. In the aftermath of the Cold War, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire, Clinton was aiming to recast things in the U.S. within an essentially secular bourgeois-democratic framework. Even though he was making more concessions to religion, even to religious fundamentalism, he was still operating within a secular bourgeois-democratic framework, a “post-Enlightenment” secular bourgeois-democratic framework. And that is being opposed by a whole other framework, which is not yet completely dominant and consolidated as the ruling class framework—as the form in which things are being run, to put it simply. But it has got a lot of initiative, and it is a monster that can never be fully fed—and is not going to stay on its leash if it's not fed. So there you go. That doesn't mean this fascist, and in particular Christian Fascist, framework, and the forces determined to impose that framework, are bound to win out, even if we do nothing. But there is a definite dynamic at play which is very heavy.

We really have to recognize that there is a kind of a conjuncture here—a coming together and heightening of major contradictions—but at the same time this is not static and frozen and divorced from larger forces in the world. It is not bound to remain as it is, it almost certainly won't remain exactly as it is now—in fact, we can say with a great deal of certainty that it won't remain exactly as it is now. But things are posing themselves a certain way—there is a definite dynamic at play—and this is not a matter of that famous (or infamous) notion of the “political pendulum” that will somehow “swing back the other way.” Things are being taken to extremes, and right now this is in an overwhelmingly negative way. At the same time, once again, there are favorable factors within this. We have to urgently work on those potentially positive elements within this situation and this dynamic—and we have to work on the negative factors, too, and transform them and repolarize things. And then if, or when, there are major turning points in the world, because of what other forces do and how the ruling class of the U.S. responds, the result of all that can be very different than the definitely negative outcome that would occur if this current dynamic is not radically transformed.

We have a tremendous amount of responsibility, politically and ideologically, in this regard. We have to unite and struggle with—and we must not tail—the many progressive people and forces who find themselves still desperately trying to find a solution to all this within the framework of the capitalist system and bourgeois democracy. We have to unite with their sentiments of hatred for what is represented by the current regime in the U.S. and the direction in which it is taking U.S. society, and the world; but we also have to struggle with them and transform the current opposition and resistance into something else, something radically different. And we have to bring forward a powerful, revolutionary movement among the basic masses. That is a decisive element within all this.

We cannot sit around and let this “faith-based” stuff, and all this religious shit that's leading people to act against their own fundamental interests, have free rein. I will have more—a lot more—to say about that, but here my main point is that the polarization that is shaping up now is, in its main aspect, very negative, but it is not all one-sided and static: there are definitely positive, and potentially very positive, elements and factors within all this. This current polarization is part of a very dynamic and volatile mix, and it can change radically, in one direction or another. But, even if this Christian Fascist element ceases to be, at a given time or for a certain period, *the* major feature within all this, it will never completely disappear, or never cease to be *a* major feature of the terrain and of the “configuration” within ruling class

politics—until there is a revolutionary transformation of society as a whole.

The fundamental question is this: What are going to be the dynamics of all this, and where will they lead? To horrible consequences and more and more negative polarization— *or* to a situation where the masses of people are wrenching a different repolarization out of all this, and bringing into being a different dynamic, leading toward a radically different resolution of all this?

That is where we come in—that is the challenge, and the responsibility, we must take up.

Not Being Jerry Rubin, Or Even Dimitrov, But Actually Being Revolutionary Communists: THE CHALLENGE OF DEFENDING FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS — FROM A COMMUNIST PERSPECTIVE, AND NO OTHER

As I have emphasized many times, it is very important to understand the complexity that's involved in the current situation and its development. Bush doesn't do nuance, but we have to. That's the difference between the solid core that exists now within the ruling class' — the group now at the core of its power — and our solid core, which must be combined with, which must involve, a lot of elasticity. We have to understand the complexity of things and not see them in oversimplified dogmatic terms.

If the current polarization in U.S. society continues, and if the "center does not hold" in the old way, and a new form of rule in society is brought into being — as a continuation of the current trajectory — that will not be a good thing, it will be a very bad thing. The task of repolarization in society, ideologically and politically, not only poses itself acutely now, but it will be an ongoing challenge and task in terms of all the political, and ideological, work we do to prepare for and then to seize on the direct approach and then the full ripening of a revolutionary situation and a revolutionary crisis, when a revolutionary people, of millions, has been brought forward. And in the way this is acutely posed now we can see not only its immediate but also its strategic dimension.

To get into one important aspect of this, there is the whole prospect of our having to lead the struggle to defeat attempts to trample on and abolish bourgeois-democratic rights — and perhaps even bourgeois democracy (the bourgeois-democratic form of capitalist rule) itself. This could have arisen in relation to the recent (2004) election — particularly if there had actually been an attempt by those currently at the core of power (those grouped around Bush, in a general sense) to suspend that election, or some other attempt to suppress what people understand to be fundamental rights. But what we have emphasized — and what I want to emphasize again here

— is the need for us to do this from our communist perspective and with the goal of proletarian revolution and ultimately communism — and nothing else and nothing less. The point is that we must not degenerate into bourgeois democrats ourselves in taking up the challenge of defeating attempts to trample on and abolish bourgeois-democratic rights.

One way to put this — taking as a point of reference the history of the international communist movement, and in particular its experience in relation to the fascist danger, in the period leading into World War 2 — is that we must defeat attempts to trample on and abolish bourgeois-democratic rights without falling into being Dimitrov¹ — not attempting to build a united front against fascism whose essential objective is just to preserve bourgeois rule in the form of bourgeois democracy.

Or another way to get at this is to say that we must not fall into being Jerry Rubin. What I mean by this is that at one point, back in the '60s, Jerry Rubin, a well-known rebel of those days, ran for mayor of Berkeley. He was sort of running as a radical alternative candidate, and I remember one time seeing him on the Cal campus in Berkeley, and he exclaimed: "Hey, I just realized, there's no Democrat running for mayor, the only opponent I have is a Republican. I could actually win!" Well, he didn't win. But that's the less important point. The main and essential point is that he was already becoming like the Democrats in order to "win." So, this is another way of encapsulating the challenge (or another metaphor for the challenge) of dealing with the complexity of the situation we have to deal with. It is another dimension of why and how we have to act — and to think — like communists, like real communists, and not like the cardboard caricature of the stereotypical dogmatic "commie." How else are we going to be able to handle the contradiction of not only taking up but actually leading the struggle against attempts and outright moves to trample on and

abolish bourgeois-democratic rights — or very possibly even the whole bourgeois-democratic form and framework — and yet not become mere bourgeois democrats ourselves. How do we do this from the communist perspective and with the goal of proletarian revolution and ultimately communism — and nothing else and nothing less?

Not only in immediate terms, but thinking in terms of everything that will be involved, all the way between here and the development of a revolutionary situation, whenever that comes, this is going to be a challenge which, with all its complexity, we are going to have to take up and handle correctly.

NOTES:

1. Georgi Dimitrov was a leader of the Comintern (the Communist International, which was founded by Lenin shortly after the victory of the Soviet Revolution and played a major role in the development of the international communist movement, until the Comintern was abolished during World War 2). After the seizure and consolidation of power by Hitler and the NAZIs in Germany in the early 1930s, Dimitrov put forward the thesis, adopted by the Comintern, that the pressing task, to which everything else should be subordinated, was the defeat of fascism; this amounted to arguing that the goal of communists, at least for a period of time, should be reduced to simply defending and preserving the bourgeois-democratic form of capitalist rule and not to overthrow capitalism and replace it with the rule of the proletariat and socialism.

THE FASCISTS AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE “WEIMAR REPUBLIC” ... AND WHAT WILL REPLACE IT

These reactionary religious fundamentalists in the U.S., whom we have very correctly identified as Christian Fascists, are actually calling for things to be done in society, and by the government, that many people still believe would not or could not really be done in a country like the U.S. “They could never really be serious about doing that,” many people will say, speaking of things like literally applying what the Bible says about homosexuals—that homosexuals must be put to death. Well, people had better realize how serious these Christian Fascists are, what they actually intend to do, and how serious the situation is. Among these Christian Fascists, including ones who are very influential and powerful, and powerfully connected, there is very definitely an intention of imposing “biblically based morality,” including things like the execution of homosexuals, as “the law of the land.”

Or take another dimension of this: the institution of marriage. In the dispute around gay marriage, some of the people defending the right to gay marriage have tried to answer the argument that gay marriage will undermine the institution of marriage by saying: “If you are really worried about the future of marriage, why don’t you do something about divorce?” Well, as the saying goes, “be careful what you wish for!” I doubt very seriously if those who make this argument by way of defending the right to gay marriage—or at least the great majority of them—actually want to see a situation where divorce is outlawed. But, once again, people better realize how serious this is—and that there are powerful forces who are very serious indeed about outlawing divorce. The fact is that, in Louisiana and some other states, there is already a law providing for “covenant marriages.” There are two kinds of marriages in those states now: in addition to “regular” marriage, there is “covenant marriage,” which, as its religious overtones imply, is based on provisions taken from the Bible.

These “covenant marriages” eliminate “no fault divorce,” they make it much more difficult for those who have entered into these marriages to get a divorce. At this point these “covenant marriages” are entered into voluntarily, and there is still the alternative of “regular” marriages—at *this point!* But these (for now voluntary) “covenant marriages” are part of a very definite and determined drive by Christian Fascist forces to get rid of divorce altogether—to outlaw it outright—and, in a male supremacist society like this, everybody knows, or should know, what that would mean. It would mean that millions and millions of women will be trapped in oppressive—and even physically and sexually abusive—marriages.

Claudia Koonz pointed out in her book *The Nazi Conscience* that, among the Nazis in Germany, there was a kind of “division of labor”: at times at least, Hitler would sound a more reasonable, and even at times conciliatory, tone—while his followers would be agitating and taking action around the most openly vicious and brutal measures, directed against Jewish people, communists, homosexuals, and others whom the Nazis regarded as an abomination and a blot upon German society. And all this laid the basis for the mass round-ups and executions, and the literal genocide, that followed under the rule of the Nazis. Similarly, the 21st-century American equivalent of Nazis, the Christian Fascists and others generally in the same camp, have their hitmen (and women), including those like David Horowitz, Rush Limbaugh, and Ann Coulter, who are openly foaming at the mouth with attacks on those they see as standing in the way of their program. And, besides attacking people who are genuinely opposed not only to this fascism but to the capitalist-imperialist system as a whole, one of the main lines of their assault is (to use a very relevant analogy) viciously going after the Weimar Republic (the bourgeois-democratic republic in Germany after

World War¹, which was replaced and forcibly abolished when Hitler and the Nazis came to power in the 1930s). We have to understand the meaning and significance of this, and the purpose behind it.

Going after the equivalent of the Weimar Republic in the U.S. today, the Democratic Party and the "Liberals," and so on—attacking them as nothing less than traitors—is part of an overall program aimed at silencing and outright suppressing, including through the force of the state, any group or section of society, even within the ruling class, that would pose an obstacle to the implementation of the program that the Christian Fascists, and forces in the same general camp with them, are very seriously seeking to impose on the U.S. (and indeed throughout the world). There is, and for some time there has been, a very definite, conscious and concerted effort by the forces in that general fascist camp to systematically attack not just communists, or anarchists and other radicals, but **liberals, mainstream ruling class liberal politicians**—attacking them as having been nothing less than **traitors**, from the time of the cold war to the "war on terror."

David Horowitz's latest book is called *Unholy Alliance: Radical Islam and the American Left*. In looking it over it is clear that it is yet another diatribe that insists that the "liberals" and the left in the U.S. are at least objectively in the same camp with the Islamic fundamentalists and on the wrong side of the "war on terror." This should be taken very seriously, including because Horowitz has ties with prominent and powerful Republican Party politicians and functionaries, right up to the White House. If you listen to Rush Limbaugh, at this point his main line of attack is not against radicals and communists, such as our party—his attacks are not so much directed against actual leftists all that much—but are much more directed against the mainstream ruling class liberals, because again one of the ways that fascism triumphs is by tearing down "the Weimar Republic"—going after bourgeois-democratic forces in the ruling class—attacking their decadence, their weakness, their inability to defend the national entity, etc. And this is a phenomenon that's been developing over some time in the U.S., and is now very acute. Ann Coulter recently wrote a book with the explicit title: *Treason*. These people are out there creating public opinion around this, while Bush still maintains, much of the time, a posture of "inclusiveness" and willingness to work with other ruling class forces, at least on certain terms. Bush didn't say, during his debates with Kerry, for example: "You are a traitor, and ought to be put to death." But there are many people, aligned with and supporting Bush now, who are very definitely, and repeatedly, saying these kinds of things. When that is not repudiated by Bush and others in power, what does it mean? What are the impli-

cations of this?

The answer is not to seek to defend and maintain the "Weimar Republic" (bourgeois democracy—the "democratic form" of capitalist dictatorship¹) as such. That does not offer a real solution, and certainly not one in the interests of the masses of people and the great majority of humanity. But we should recognize and not be blind to what it means when these fascists put the "Weimar Republic"—by analogy, the liberals in the ruling class—in the camp of enemy, and go so far as to label them *traitors*, and go after them in that way. What is that preparing the ground for, what are the implications of that? The point, and our objective, once again, is not to defend the Weimar Republic—tailing and upholding the "liberal" section of the imperialist ruling class—but to fully recognize, and oppose in a radically different way and toward radically different ends, the seriousness of these attacks and what this all represents. In previous talks and writings I have spoken to this phenomenon of the unraveling of what for some time has been the "cohering center" of the society and the rule of the bourgeoisie in the U.S.—and how we are already seeing manifestations of that.² I have emphasized that all of this will not, by any means, be positive in the short run, and left to itself—and it is not the role of communists, it is not meeting our responsibilities, to simply stand by and celebrate all the unraveling of the existing cohering center and form of capitalist rule and think it is going to mean that something positive is bound to emerge from this and in fact is just going to "fall into our lap." We have to take up the tremendous challenge of *repolarization* — *repolarization for revolution*.

The "Weimar Republic" does need to be replaced, and superseded. The bourgeois republic—the rule of capitalism and imperialism, in its bourgeois-democratic form—is in fact a repressive system of rule, rooted in a whole network and process of exploitation and oppression, which brings untold, and unnecessary, suffering to millions, and literally billions, of people, throughout the world, including within the republic itself. It needs to be replaced and superseded, however, not by an even more grotesque and more openly murderous form of the same system, but by a radically new society, and a radically different kind of state, that will open the way and lead finally to the abolition of all forms of oppressive and repressive rule and all relations of domination and exploitation, throughout the world.

NOTES:

1. In a number of places, including in the book *Democracy: Can't We Do Better Than That?* and a recent talk, "Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism," Bob Avakian explains and examines how societies like the U.S., even where they

may not be ruled through open, undisguised repression and terror, and even with all their talk of “democracy for all,” are in fact bourgeois dictatorships—rule over society by the capitalist class, or bourgeoisie, based fundamentally on a monopoly of armed force (and in particular “legitimate” armed force) by that capitalist class and its “right” and ability to use that armed power, including the police and armed forces as well as the courts and bureaucracies, to put down, as brutally as it sees fit, any opposition or resistance that poses a serious challenge to its rule.

2. See the article “The Pyramid of Power and the Struggle to Turn This Whole Thing Upside Down” (*Revolutionary Worker* #1269, February 27, 2005). Also see previous articles in this current series by Bob Avakian, including “The Coming Civil War and Repolarization for Revolution in the Present Era” (*RW* #1274) and “The Center—Can It Hold? The Pyramid as Two Ladders” (*Revolution* #4), all available online at revcom.us

Religion and the Right to Religion

DARK AGES MENTALITY AND THE LIBERATING OUTLOOK AND METHOD OF COMMUNISM

As part of the basic political dividing lines in society, and how religion relates to this, we have to draw a clear line between a society where people have the right to their religion and one where Dark Ages mentality is imposed on people—to oppose science, to oppose rational thinking, to oppose knowing the real world. It is very important to make, and insist on, that distinction. Now it is true that, for some of the masses the religion they are given actually falls on the wrong side of that dividing line, but they may not know that—they may not think of it that way. And when it's posed in those terms, I'm not sure a lot of masses who are religious would like to be on that side of that dividing line, supporting Dark Ages ignorance and suppression of science and rational thought. Whereas some of these hard-core Christian fundamentalists who are the social base of Christian Fascism actually don't mind thinking in those terms. They do regard science as an enemy, they do regard scientific thinking and a rational approach to things as the work of the devil, in essence. So, it is important to formulate things in a way that draws the dividing lines correctly, and enables the masses to be on the right side when, on the one hand, spontaneity might land them on the wrong side but, on the other hand, that's not really where they want to be—and, fundamentally, not where their real interests lie. At this point, and for some time, many of them will want their religion, but they don't really want to be in the Dark Ages, even though in many cases that's where their religion will actually take them if they follow it all the way out. That is a contradiction that needs to be understood and acted on, in all its complexity and contradictoriness. There is a difference—a very important difference—between masses who are caught up in forms of religious

fundamentalism and others who are consciously rejecting the whole scientific approach to reality and seeking to be part of imposing a Dark Ages mentality.

With regard to my talks on religion (particularly the one entitled “God Doesn't Exist—And We Need Liberation Without Gods”¹), it is very important to make concerted efforts to get this into the prisons as well as to distribute it broadly among the masses throughout society. I really believe that this can provide an ideological basis, and concrete means, for the advanced, revolutionary-minded people in the prisons—as well as more generally in society—to stand up firmly against and really go after the backward religious stuff that is promoted at every turn.

We have to do a lot of hardcore ideological work—this is something whose importance we really have to deeply understand. Once again, with regard to prisoners in particular, they should be developing themselves, ideologically and politically, as revolutionaries—and not just “revolutionaries” in some general sense but more specifically as communist revolutionaries. They should be a force for this revolution, politically and ideologically. And they could play a crucial role in spreading the message of revolution, of communism, not only among prisoners but among their families and others they have contact with and can reach outside of the prisons. That is an additional dimension to the important contribution that prisoners can make to the cause.

I read another one of these statistics that make your head spin around on its axis: something like 10 percent of Black males between 25 and 29 are in prison. That's

another one of these things that makes your hair stand up and your head spin around. What the fuck—what does that say about this society, this system?! And, for everyone who is in prison now, there are several who have been in prison, and there are a number of family members and loved ones outside prison. Some people in prison have the time, or somehow seize the time, to think deeply and to train themselves intellectually and to explore things. Most people get caught up in bullshit, but not everybody does. And even some of those who do get caught up in this still try to fight it. And revolution—communist revolution—really does represent the only way out for them.

The religious fundamentalists, of various kinds, make a point of recruiting in the prisons, and they come with a heavy ideological message. There is something very important to be learned from the “Losing My Religion” article that appeared in our newspaper within the past year.² The author of the article, who comes from a family steeped in religious fundamentalism, says that his own life experiences had provided plenty of reasons to reject religion, but it was only when there was another coherent ideology that he could take up that he completely broke with religion. And that coherent ideology wasn’t another religion—it was the scientific outlook and method of communism, which he was introduced to through writings of mine which he encountered in college. He also commented on that: he said that these writings, and the outlook and method they embody, taught him to do what religion never did—to think critically. It is not at all the case that people can only “lose their religion” by replacing it with another religion in some form. But there does have to be another explanation about the world and existence and why this is the way it is, and how it could be different. And how an individual relates to that. If you want to rupture people out of shit, not only stuff that lands them in prison, but the daily shit they are caught up in, in the society, you have to have a really strong hardcore ideological thing to bring to them. It doesn’t have to be dogmatic—it should not be dogmatic, and it should not be religious—but it has to be coherent and systematic. It has to explain the world—and in our case we can actually explain it in a scientific way [BA laughs]. That’s an advantage of communism over religion, even though religion has certain short-term advantages because it can appeal to things we can’t appeal to, things that go along with spontaneity. But we have the advantage of actually being able to make reality make sense for people. That’s a very powerful thing.

We should not underestimate the importance, not only with prisoners but in general, of doing a lot of ideological work to really enable people to see the world in a wholly different way—really the way it is. To take the pieces of this puzzle that are all out of whack and don’t

fit together—it’s like looking through a weird kaleidoscope the way most people see reality. And then it’s misinterpreted for them by all these different bourgeois and reactionary ideologies and programs, and so on, including various religious views. But communist ideology and its application to the world is a way of taking reality and having it make sense for people. That’s what the CD of my speech on religion³ aims to do, that’s what we urgently need to do in general.

We really should not underestimate the importance of winning people on an ideological basis. Yes, you can’t win them only with ideas. If you don’t provide political—and in that sense practical—means of waging the struggle against oppression and the system in which all this oppression is rooted, then ultimately you can’t hold them just with ideology. But it’s true as well, and very important to understand, that you also can’t win them politically without winning them ideologically. And besides, we want people to have a vision of what they’re fighting for, in the largest sense.

So all this emphasizes, from a number of angles, the great importance of ideology—and of boldly popularizing, winning people to, and developing their grasp of the emancipating ideology and method of communism.

NOTES:

1. “God Doesn’t Exist—And We Need Liberation Without Gods” and a second talk, “Christianity and Society—the Old Testament and the New Testament, Resistance and Revolution,” are available online as audio downloads at bobavakian.net.

2. See *Revolutionary Worker* #1237 (April 25, 2004), available online at revcom.us

3. “God Doesn’t Exist—And We Need Liberation Without Gods.” In addition to downloading this speech online, contact Revolution Books in your area for information on how to order it on CD.

RELIGION AND UNITY-STRUGGLE-UNITY WITH PROGRESSIVE RELIGIOUS FORCES

Within the fight against the juggernaut—the rolling monster of war and repression, driven forward by the Bush regime—and including the growing “fascistization” (growing repression of an essentially fascist nature and even developments toward outright fascist rule) there is the whole question of the battle around morality: against traditional morality and Christian Fascism, around the question of homosexuality, around the question of women and in particular abortion, around the question of separation of church and state, and so on. We need to play a much greater role in the ideological and also in the political battle around this, in the battle around public opinion and in important political struggles in these spheres.

We need to be intervening in and carrying out a process of unity-struggle-unity with a great diversity of people around this whole realm of morality and values. As part of this, we need to increase exponentially and in multiplying ways our work with religious forces. We need to be working with them in general anyway, but we also need to work with them specifically in terms of maximizing *their role* in, first of all really coming to grips with, and second of all battling against Christian Fascism. One of the interesting things that happened after a talk I gave on religion (“Christianity and Society—The Old Testament, The New Testament, Christian Fascism, Social Change and Revolution,” available in audio at bobavakian.net) was that, after this talk, one of these progressive religious people made the comment: “I kind of get this point on unity-struggle-unity, because it’s working on me.” [laughter]

There was also an interesting exchange where I was talking with another important and influential progressive clergyman who does work in the prisons. At one

point, I asked him, “What is it you do there?” And he explained that what he is trying to do, in basic terms, is to get people to move from things like Pentecostalism and similar fundamentalist versions of Christianity to a more thinking Christianity. So I asked: “How are you doing?” [laughter] He answered: “I’m making some progress, I see some results.” So I said, “Well, that’s good.”

Now, that is probably not the response you would expect from a stereotypical dogmatic communist. But the point is, yes, I have had, and hopefully will continue to have, some good discussion and struggle with people like this about a communist as opposed to a religious worldview—and, in talks I have given, which some of these progressive religious people have heard, I have hammered at the religious scriptures and put forward atheism quite boldly and strongly—but I am very interested in the question of how, from their own viewpoint, progressive religious people like this can wage and contribute to the overall struggle against the Christian Fascists. We have a role to play, including through struggle waged in a good way, to help and enable these people to maximize their own positive aspect and their contributions to the overall struggle. Yes, we should struggle with them ideologically, but most of them are not going to be won to communism, certainly not in an immediate framework, so we need to continue to have dialogue with them, we have to learn from them—there are important things we can learn from them—and at the same time we have to try to enable them to play the most positive role they can play in the struggle.

These progressive clergy and other progressive religious people need to have meetings with other people like themselves, they need to “go on the road,” they need

to engage this question of fascism, particularly Christian Fascism—they need to challenge it, they need to attack it—they need to recognize, first of all, what a grave danger it is posing to society and to everything that they stand for, as well as the future of humanity in the largest sense. We need to be working—uniting and struggling—in a good way with these people. If we can apply the correct method and approach to this, and unite with and help unleash other forces on the basis of applying this method and approach, then (if you'll pardon the expression) it will be possible to “achieve miracles” in transforming the political terrain and the political terms of things, with regard to the fascist, and specifically the Christian Fascist, danger in particular, and more generally in terms of the whole direction of society (and ultimately the world overall).

The Bible and Baby-Killing

THE RIGHT TO ABORTION

AND THE WHOLE DIRECTION OF SOCIETY

In countering the attack on abortion as “killing babies”—which is one of the main lines of attack of the religious fundamentalists—we should bring out forcefully things like Psalm 137 and the book of Isaiah (for example, chapters 9 through 14 in Isaiah). In those chapters of the book of Isaiah in particular, “The Lord” (the “god” of the Bible) and the prophet Isaiah, speaking directly on behalf of “The Lord,” calls repeatedly for destruction and atrocity to be brought down on the peoples, including the small children, who have angered “The Lord.” And, as in Isaiah, so Psalm 137 ends with this call for smashing to pieces the little ones of Babylon:

*“O Babylon, you devastator,
Happy shall they be who pay
you back
what you have done to us!
Happy shall be they who take
your little ones
and dash them against the rock!”*

Here in Psalm 137, as well as in the book of Isaiah, and elsewhere in the Bible, when it calls for, demands and celebrates the bashing in OF the heads of babies, what is being talked about is NOT a *fetus*, in the uterus of a woman, but babies that have been born and are distinct human beings, physically separate from their mother. So, the next time we hear of these fanatical fundamentalists howling that women who have abortions and doctors and other providers of abortions are “baby killers,” these “Bible-thumpers” should be confronted like this: “Do you believe in the Bible?” “Yes,” they will of course reply. “Well, then, do you believe in *this*?”—

referring to what is in passages like the end of Psalm 137 or in the book of Isaiah, where “The Lord” and those representing for “The Lord” demand and celebrate the killing of actual babies. “If you won’t uphold *that*,” we should insist to them, “then don’t wave your Bible around and invoke ‘biblical authority’ to denounce others as ‘baby killers’! If you are going to try to ‘pick and choose’ what you will uphold from the Bible, then you are *hypocrites*—because all this time you have been insisting that the Bible is the literal word of god and has the absolute moral authority of god’s law. So, unless you will uphold everything, every last word, that is in the Bible—including where it repeatedly calls for wanton and grotesque atrocities, like the mass murder of actual babies—then you need to just shut up, and quit harassing and threatening women who want abortions and providers who enable them to have safe abortions.”

Now, if these fundamentalist fanatics *will* uphold these atrocities in the Bible, *including the slaughter of actual babies*, then they definitely are the *worst hypocrites* when they condemn *others* as “baby-killers.” And this is especially outrageous when they hurl this accusation of “baby-killers” at women (and doctors and others who assist them) who in fact are not “killing babies” but are carrying out a medical procedure which aborts a fetus, not a separate, developed human being (I will come back to this in a minute). In this case, too, the fundamentalist fanatics have nothing to say—nothing that anyone should listen to—about “killing babies.”

Another very important point is this: These people who attack the right to abortion are overwhelmingly *opposed to birth control* as well—and they are opposed not only to the IUD, which technically prevents the embryo from attaching to the uterus after the egg has

been fertilized, they are opposed to *any and every kind of birth control*. Certainly, all these Catholic reactionaries who are opposed to abortion are also opposed to birth control. It is a matter of official Catholic Church doctrine to oppose birth control, for a fundamental reason that is very much at the heart of this whole issue: according to this reactionary religious viewpoint, a woman's role is to be a subordinate to her husband and a breeder of his children, and birth control as well as abortion can undermine that. And the Protestant fundamentalist fascists are also overwhelmingly opposed to birth control—not only outside the confines of marriage, but even *within* it (this is clear from many statements of leading Protestant fundamentalist opponents of abortion, although it is important to pin them down on this very concretely).

These are ways that we can hit back hard at them, politically and ideologically, getting to what is the essence here: It is not the supposed "killing of babies," it is that they want women to be in essence the property of men, to be controlled by their husbands and to be breeders of children, breeders of property, for their husbands. We should continue to hammer at them: "*That is what your Bible advocates, and that is what you are for. And this is shown not only by your opposition to abortion but also by the fact that, at the same time, you are against birth control.*"

It is also very important to be bringing things back to the reality of what 90 plus percent of abortions actually consist of—the fact that they are performed in the first trimester, the first three months of pregnancy, when the fetus is anywhere from the size of the period at the end of this sentence to about an inch in length. Those opposed to abortion distort and play up things they make sound like horrors, like late-term abortions. First of all, they label these procedures "partial birth abortions," distorting what they actually are. Second of all, they misrepresent how often they actually occur—the fact that they are really quite rare—and they misrepresent under what conditions they generally occur, they leave out or push to the background the health of the woman in question. And then *this*—their distortions of late-term abortions—becomes, in their propaganda, identified with *all* abortions. Not that we should be defensive about the necessity for late-term abortions, but all this is just total distortion. We have to wage a counter-offensive here, and get to what the essence of the issue is. In the case of the great majority of abortions, over 90 percent, what is involved, in terms of the fetus, is a very tiny clump of cells—it is that versus a woman's fate. That's what we're talking about here. Physiologically and socially, that's essentially what we're talking about here—the fate of women vs. a clump of cells, which at that point (during the first three months in particular) are by no means even completely differentiated (into different organs and parts

of the body with different specific functions) and certainly are not anything like a developed human being—and are, in fact, a tiny clump of cells. We have to get things back to the *real* issue.

This is not only a crucial issue in an overall sense, but it is being even more sharply posed in the aftermath of the 2004 election, where the Christian Fascists are pushing like crazy to abolish the right to abortion—they are insisting to Bush and the Republicans: "You've gotta deliver on this now." That is why they went after Arlen Specter (a long-time Senator from Pennsylvania, who is supposedly a more "moderate Republican," whatever that means), because Specter cautioned Bush about nominating people as judges who would support the outright outlawing of abortion.

And, as with the political situation in general at this point, the polarization around the question of abortion is not favorable now. Even among women, particularly younger women, there is a lot of confusion around this issue, a lot of influence of the reactionary offensive against abortion, including the characterization of abortion as "killing babies." Many of these young women have not understood the essence of this issue—and many other people have lost sight of it, or become "fuzzy" and "conflicted" about it—not only because of the reactionary offensive but also because the bourgeois-democratic leaders of the women's movement have let themselves believe that they could just become passive and let Democratic Party politicians like Clinton and Gore take care of it. They fell into the false notion that, "Oh, they'll never really take away the right to abortion—or, if there is a real threat of that, we just gotta vote for Democrats." They have let the other side—the Christian Fascists and the reactionaries generally, with their offensive against abortion—completely have the initiative, politically and ideologically (including morally), for years and years now.

And, while it was of course a very good thing that a million people came out to demonstrate recently in support of the right to abortion, by itself that will not end up amounting to very much, because these people haven't seized the political and ideological initiative around this question. And, to be blunt, many of the million women and men who were there, to support the right to abortion, would have a very hard time answering the moral and overall ideological offensive of the other side—other than to just sort of retreat into certain catch phrases about a woman's right to choose, without being able to engage the substance of the attack on that.

It is also a fact that in general the women's movement is shrinking because it is not engaging, or not effectively engaging, key issues that affect women. There is a lot of right-wing Christian Fascist organization among women who are frightened by all the things that the fem-

inists, for good reason, cherish and uphold. And those questions are not really being addressed by the more reformist women's movement. It's not that the women who are being heavily influenced by the Christian Fascist arguments are the main group that needs to be reached right now, but they shouldn't be just ignored and written off either.

I am going into this and giving it a lot of emphasis because these questions are very important themselves, because all this is a major part of how polarization is presently taking shape in U.S. society—and because this could play a big part in favorable repolarization, touching profoundly on the whole direction of society.

This is yet another crucial challenge that we must take up, coming from our full revolutionary communist perspective and its goal of the complete emancipation of women, the abolition of all oppression and exploitation and ultimately the emancipation of all of humanity.

THE FOOLISHNESS OF CONFUSING RELIGION WITH FUNDAMENTALIST FASCISM

An important point—and this is spoken to in the “Right-Wing Conspiracy” supplement and *Preaching From a Pulpit of Bones* and talks I gave recently on religion¹—is that there is an acute contradiction that we have to recognize: Christian Fascism will have a lot to do with the polarization that occurs in U.S. society in this period, and even the pulling apart of the center in the form in which it has existed; but, on the other side of the contradiction, the polarization cannot be allowed to be or to remain around religion *per se* (in and of itself). One of the indications of this—and this is something I have also called attention to sharply—is that there have been consistent efforts by the Christian Fascists to reach out to people in the inner cities, among the oppressed masses, particularly through the churches, to try to ensnare them on an ideological basis to act against their own interests.

At the time that “Right-Wing Conspiracy” was written, Clinton was in office, hanging on barely. Let’s not forget, he was actually impeached; and I believe all (or in any case nearly all) the Republicans voted for a conviction—it’s just that they didn’t have the total number of votes they needed. If they’d gotten some significant defections from the Democratic Party, they would have actually thrown him out of office on a ridiculous basis relative to what their Constitution is actually talking about—“high crimes and misdemeanors.” But Clinton remained in office, so these efforts of the Christian Fascists in the inner city were made then largely through privately funded projects, by and large (things like “The Samaritan Project” of the Christian Coalition). But now Bush is in office, and the ruling structures of the government are saturated with Christian Fascists—more all the time. It’s like the movie *Birds* [BA laughs]—they just keep coming and coming, and filling in every crack and crevice of government agencies. And there are the “faith-based” initiatives and programs, backed and funded by the government, which are increasingly the means

through which social services are supposedly being addressed. So, this has the force, the resources, and the authority of the federal government (and the bourgeois state as a whole) behind it now.

And you did see in this election some of these Black ministers, for example, lining up with Bush (never mind Don King and his support for Bush—who knows what the fuck that was about, it probably had to do with his financial situation—I’m talking about something more serious than that, since he is sort of a self-conscious clown and minstrel). A number of Black preachers—and this is a serious thing—lined up with Bush around gay marriage, and even around abortion. Here they were, lining up with reaction, with outright fascism, on the basis of traditional religion and traditional values.

Now, just to be clear, my point is *not* that we should, by any means, be casting Black preachers in general into the enemy camp—that would be very wrong and a terrible mistake. We should certainly not be giving up on uniting with many of them—and repolarizing at least many of those who are now playing a role that is not very good, or even is very bad. It is a fact—and a fact that we cannot fail to recognize—that more than a few of them are right now *not* playing a good role. And there does have to be work done around exposing the role that some are falling into of leading people, yes, toward a program that has a genocidal element in it—a program that could lead to genocide against Black people and other oppressed peoples—on a basis of reactionary traditional values, patriarchy, religious fundamentalism, and everything that’s wrapped up in that.

While all that is important, the fundamental point I’m making here is we cannot allow the polarization to be around religion *per se* (in and of itself), although a big part of the polarization does have to be against Christian Fascism, against reactionary theocratic fundamentalism. And there is a vast difference between those two things

(religion in a general sense and, on the other hand, Christian Fascism and reactionary theocratic fundamentalism generally); there is a qualitative difference which we should understand. And if we don't understand and handle this correctly, we're going to aid the enemy in pushing, not just preachers, but masses of people, into the enemy camp—or allowing them to be dragged, against their own fundamental interests, into the camp of the enemy, or to be confused and sit on the sidelines when they should be frontline fighters against all this. So we cannot allow this to be the polarization—it cannot be around religion as such.

I noticed, in a report on a speech by Cornel West, that during this speech he pointedly said: “My secular friends on the left have to understand that most of the country is religious.” Well, speaking for our Party, we do, of course, understand this—and we do have to understand this—but perhaps not quite in the way he means this. If you listen to the recent talks I gave on religion, there is conscious attention—not simply out of tactical considerations, but fundamentally out of principle—to draw the distinction between religion in general and reactionary religious fundamentalism (there is that distinction in our *Draft Programme*, and this needs to be even more fully developed in my opinion in the finalization of the *Programme*). There is a qualitative difference—and we have to clearly and fully understand the difference—between religion, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, theocratic fundamentalist fascism, which is seeking to impose religious order and “biblically-based” law and rule, as interpreted by reactionary theocrats, onto U.S. society and much of the world, for that matter.

Think about the fact that the son of Billy Graham—who is “credited” with beginning the conversion of George W. Bush back in the '80s—Billy Graham's son, Franklin Graham, a close associate and confidante of Bush, makes a public statement that Islam is not only a false but an *evil* religion. (This has also been said by Jerry Falwell and other prominent Christian Fascists.) Think of the impact a statement like that has in the world, particularly in the Islamic world, when this guy (Franklin Graham) is someone who is known to be closely associated with Bush! You can believe that every Islamic fundamentalist will draw the association—and call people's attention to the association—between Franklin Graham and Bush. So, you have Bush, right after September 11, letting the word “crusade” come out—and then, “ooh...oops...” retracting it...“I didn't mean that”—and then you have the Franklin Grahams and others putting forward exactly that line—that, in effect, the “war against terrorism” is a crusade against “evil Islam.”

With all this, the point once again is that Christian

Fascism will have a lot to do with the polarization in society, including as we work to repolarize things; but the polarization cannot be allowed to be around religion *as such*. We have to understand, first of all, the essential and crucial distinction between the two, and then we have to act on that understanding.

NOTES:

1. See “The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy...And Why Clinton and the Democrats Are No Answer” (Revolutionary Worker #1255, October 17, 2004) and *Preaching from a Pulpit of Bones: We Need Morality, But Not Traditional Morality* (New York: Banner Press, 1999). The talks on religion referred to here are “God Doesn't Exist—And We Need Liberation Without Gods” and “Christianity and Society—the Old Testament and the New Testament, Resistance and Revolution,” which are available online as audio downloads at bobavakian.net.

RELIGION, MORALITY ... POLARIZATION, REPOLARIZATION TWO SOLID CORES IN FUNDAMENTAL OPPOSITION

If you go back to what I was speaking to earlier, with the metaphor, or image, of the pyramid as two ladders,¹ and you begin to see the ladders slide down and the center not holding them together at the top anymore, then you see more fully the relevance and importance of the comment by Hertzberg in *The New Yorker*,² which I cited earlier—in effect: “Uh oh, now not only does the radical right have a lot more power, but this is an opening to the radical left”—because there is the whole prospect of the center’s not holding in the way it has been.

Now, it is crucial to grasp that a positive repolarization is not going to happen spontaneously: it depends to a tremendous degree on what we do, and how we understand—and act on an understanding of—reality. But, in fundamental terms, it is true that things can increasingly be posed in terms of two solid cores in opposition to each other, at opposite poles. Yes, there are and will be a number of other forces in the field. It’s like Lenin said: It is not a matter of two armies lining up, and one says, “we’re for socialism” while the other says, “we’re for imperialism.” There will be many gradations and complexities. But there will be, or can be, as this unfolds, two poles in fundamental opposition to each other: on the one hand, *their* solid core—the solid core of bourgeois rule now—with no elasticity; and, on the other hand, the solid core that is represented by communism and the communist outlook and method, as we must understand and apply it—a solid core *with a lot of elasticity*. And then, if things do go that way, there is going to be a fight—I’ll go back to Newt Gingrich and his comparison between the situation today and that leading into the Civil War in the U.S., in the middle of the 19th century³—there will be a fight to the finish, between those two poles and the forces they are able to rally around them.

Yet, again, the challenge this poses for us—which we must very clearly recognize and very seriously con-

front—is that everything will not just “fall in our lap” in a favorable way, Humpty Dumpty does not fall apart that way. What it emphasizes is the need for—and what we have to grapple with is the means for—a more favorable *repolarization*, not tailing in the wake of the present polarization, to say nothing of simply ignoring it in a Pollyannish kind of way—or dealing with it in a way that would amount to a pitiful and paltry excuse for communism, instead of actually grasping and applying the communist outlook and method in a living way, as I have been speaking to.

Forays Into the Other Camp— Peeling Forces Away From the Enemy

One of the things that is important in the statement that was put out by our Party right after the 2004 election (“The Will of the People Was NOT Expressed in This Election”⁴) is that it does speak to the need for repolarization, very correctly, and it raises the specific point that we need some “intervention” with these people who are under the sway of fanatical Christian fundamentalism, who (as that statement very accurately describes them) are seriously addicted to Armageddon fantasies. You go into bookstores, even mainstream bookstores, and you see these reactionary fundamentalist “rapture” books by people like Tim LaHaye (whose wife, Beverly LaHaye, is the founder of Concerned Women for America, one of these right-wing Christian Fascist groups—the “mothers in the fatherland”⁵ Nazi type of thing). You have millions of people in the U.S. buying these books about the rapture. These people are indeed seriously addicted to Armageddon fantasies—and they live to a very significant degree in this self-contained, self-reinforcing world, which these books are also a big part of fostering and reinforcing. And, as our election statement says, there needs to be some serious intervention with these people. We need to actually organize some of this intervention—

and be prepared for how tough it's going to be, not only because of the nature of these forces and everything I'm saying about them, but also because the state is not on our side. The Christian Fascists may not actually have "god on their side" in reality, but they do have *the state* on their side in very significant ways.

We need youth in particular and people in general who are armed with a communist outlook going right up into these people's strongholds—at their churches, and so on—leafletting them and engaging them in debate. We need all kinds of creative ways to engage these people. Not simply to curse at them—they need to be engaged and struggled with in an overall sense to confront things they have never confronted. They have a self-contained world, and I'm not naïve about the prospects in the short term, but this needs to be done with strategic prospects and strategic considerations in mind. They need to be confronted with the reality that they are sealed off from. Many of them, not all certainly but many of them, live in suburbia and are actually rather well to do. It is wrong to think that these are all people who are poor and uneducated. Many of them are educated, in a certain way. You know, there is a book by Robert Kaplan, *The Ends of the Earth*, and one thing that really struck me and stayed with me from that book (although it is overall not a good book at all) is something that he cited having to do with Islamic fundamentalists: *There is nothing more dangerous than education on a narrow foundation*. For example, Mohammed Atta, who was apparently one of the main organizers of (and participant in) the September 11 attacks, was an engineering student. That is not to put down all engineering students as narrow-minded and backward, but there is something there, having to do with the truth that education on a narrow and a mechanical basis, on a narrow foundation, can be very dangerous. This applies to many of these Christian Fascists, who dwell in a largely self-contained world. As the author Mark Crispin Miller once put it: If you get your news only from Fox News and listen to Christian radio or whatever, you have about as much understanding of the world as people in the ninth century. Now that is hyperbole, but it speaks to something very real.

Going After the Foundations of Fundamentalism

In connection with all this, there is a point I have been emphatically calling attention to for a decade or more: It is essential to *go after the foundation* of this reactionary religious fundamentalism and biblical literalism, this Christian Fascism. I have noticed that a number of people have commented in watching the DVD of my speech on revolution⁶: "Wow, I'm really surprised at the way he goes after religion, I didn't know you could

do that." Well, it is possible to do this—and it is crucial to do it. Now, we shouldn't go after this in an unthinking dogmatic way, but the point that I've been hammering at has to do with a key contradiction I have spoken to a number of times—the contradiction that these Christian Fascists are objectively caught up in—the contradiction between an insistence on a literalist interpretation of the Bible, the insistence that the Bible is, in every word and detail, the true word of God that must be believed and followed to the letter, with all that the Bible *actually calls for*—all that in contradiction to what most people in this society would consider just, decent, and even sane.

There is a very sharp contradiction in all that. In things like the book *Preaching From a Pulpit of Bones* and the recent talks I gave on religion,⁷ I have pointed to some examples of the horrors that are not simply described but are actually *advocated*, indeed *insisted upon*, by the "god" of the Bible and his representatives—things which are in fact *praised and celebrated* in the Bible: *slavery*; the *mass raping of women* and the *murder and plunder* of people who practice other religions; *putting to death homosexuals and women who are accused of witchcraft*; *murdering women who cannot prove they are virgins* when they are married; *executing children* who strike their parents or simply are rebellious against them; and *bashing in the heads of babies* among those peoples who have angered this "god."

These things can be found throughout the Old Testament of the Bible in particular, including in the first five, so-called "Mosaic," books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—as well as in the book of Joshua and so-called "Prophetic" books like Isaiah (for example, in Chapters 9 through 14 in Isaiah).

And here is another example, which was cited in the book *Freethinkers, A History of American Secularism*, by Susan Jacoby: In the second book of Kings, it tells how one time the prophet Elisa was mocked by some children in a place—and the "god" of the Bible, worshipped by Elisa, sent forth female bears to attack the children, ripping apart their flesh. Here is how the Bible describes it (in 2 Kings 2:23-24):

"He [Elisa] went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, 'Go away, baldhead! Go away, baldhead!' When he turned around and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. Then two she-bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys."

Now, of course, any decent person in today's world would find this barbaric. But it is very important to rec-

ognize that these Christian Fascists actually insist on believing and accepting everything that is said in the Bible; and the fact is that there is *nothing* in the Bible, *including* the horrendous thing I just cited from “Second Kings” as well as the other atrocities to which I have referred, which, as a matter of principle, these Christian Fascists *would not do*. And we must understand, as well, that they are deadly serious about imposing a literalist interpretation of the Bible and of “biblically based law,” on society, if they can get into position to do so. The leaders and conscious political operatives among the Christian Fascists will and do have tactics, and even some sophistication and subtlety at times, when they feel that is useful; but, again, *speaking in fundamental terms, there is nothing in the Bible that, in principle, they don’t intend to implement—including the kinds of horrendous atrocities I have mentioned here.*

In this connection—and in case anyone does harbor the illusion that challenging people caught up in this and winning them away from it is going to be easy—I can refer to the experience that people in the RCYB (Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade, the youth group led by the Party) had in taking out a Party statement around the movie *The Passion of the Christ* in New York: When people swept up in this Christian literalist fundamentalism who were going to that movie were confronted with this contradiction—between the horrors the Bible advocates and celebrates and what people today would be expected to regard as just and decent—a lot of those people said, “Well, if that’s what the Bible says, I guess that’s what we’ve got to do.” So we can’t think that just presenting this contradiction to people in sharp terms is going to instantly win them over or cause them to fundamentally call into question their religious fundamentalism. We have to keep hammering at this, and we do need some organized “intervention” of revolutionary youth and others to go out and, in an organized and systematic way, confront these people and challenge them—not simply or essentially in terms of why they voted for Bush, not in the framework of electoral politics and the splits within the ruling class as such, but *in more fundamental terms* about the very nature of society, and the kind of world we should want to live in, and what different values and morals have to do with that. And while there are ways in which we can and should unite with others, including progressive, thinking religious people, to challenge this literalist reactionary fundamentalism, there is also a great need for us to do this directly *under our own banner* because communists are the only ones who can *fully* take this on and fully present *an alternative* to it that is actually in the fundamental interests of the great majority of humanity.

There is a need to be taking this on, much more frontally and much more systematically, in the realm of

propaganda generally, but also, yes, even in the realm of direct “intervention,” political intervention to challenge those who are presently caught up in, or significantly influenced by, this Christian Fascism. There is a need for taking on the question of morality and values—and exposing and countering the actual morality and values of this Christian fundamentalism in particular. There is a need to hit directly at the foundation of this, to hit at the faultline that lies within this Christian Fascist formation—the contradiction between a literal insistence on the Bible and what that would mean, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, what most people can consider decent and just in a modern society. There is still time to hit at that contradiction, that faultline, before they close it up. But we’d better recognize what’s at stake and what the urgency of this is.

The Battle Over Morality, Bringing Forward a Positive Morality

There is also another dimension to this whole question of hitting at this Christian Fascist morality and its values—that is, hitting politically at the *actual effect* of implementing the morality and values these people are being organized around and are embracing, in opposition to the kind of morality and values that *should be* the determining and influencing and characteristic morality and values in a society and world that people should really want to live in. So there isn’t just the negative aspect of hitting at this faultline, hitting at the very foundation of the religious fundamentalist basis of their morality, but there is also bringing forward the *positive* alternative—bringing forward positively the kind of morality people *should* be won to and should gravitate to and take up.

This also has basically two dimensions, or two levels. First is our full communist morality—and that is the principal aspect and main thing—because, as I said just a minute ago, only that communist morality can *fully* address and pose an alternative to this fascist fundamentalist morality and values. We need to go back to things like *Preaching From a Pulpit of Bones* and draw out from there and popularize what *communist morality* is and why it corresponds to the fundamental needs and interests of the masses of people.

But there also is a need to unite people more broadly in bringing forward, popularizing, and struggling for a positive morality: Besides our full vision of communist morality, there is also a need for a kind of “united front progressive morality,” if you want to put it that way. This, too, needs to be popularized, and we need to unite with other people to popularize it, even while we are in no way holding back from, and in fact are vigorously bringing forward, our full communist view of morality. Our Party’s spokespeople, our “statespeople,” our com-

rades and friends who have some history and knowledge in this sphere have to be mobilized to take up this sphere and, as a key part of this, to work in a good way with many progressive forces in waging this battle, both to oppose the Christian Fascists and to bring forward a positive alternative.

In a discussion with some progressive religious people, one of the things I said to them was: "You have to take the position, as a basic dividing line stand, that the Bible should not be taken literally—or else you cannot fight these Christian Fascists. The fact is that if you take the Bible literally you will support, you will back, and you will get drawn into, horrors. This has been true throughout history, and it's true right now. The Bible is not the literal word of God, and it cannot be taken as such."

Actually, many of these progressive religious people are very knowledgeable—not only about the Bible and religion but about other things as well. But a problem is that they generally don't know how to wield what they know most effectively and powerfully. For example, I watched someone with this progressive religious perspective on TV, on a panel with four Christian fundamentalists, and these fundamentalists kept bringing up the thing from the book of John (in the New Testament of the Bible) about how only through Jesus can you get to the father and get to heaven, and all that kind of stuff—and how, if you don't take Jesus as your savior, the Bible says you will be condemned to eternal damnation. They kept insisting, "Don't blame us, that's what God says, look, it's right in the Bible." And this one guy, who was trying to oppose them from a progressive religious standpoint, was trying to say, "Haven't you ever heard of historical criticism, don't you know that this was inserted into the Bible after the time of Jesus?" No. They don't know—and/or they *don't want* to know—about that. They just have a viewpoint and agenda they want to push, and that's it.

This progressive religious guy couldn't get a word in edgewise. Well, people like him have important things to say, *if* the ability to say this can be wrenched out of situations and confrontations like this, and if they can be led to say it in effective and forceful ways.

A key aspect in all this is mobilizing—and, in the correct sense, leading—progressive religious people to join this battle much more fully and systematically, and in much greater dimension and numbers, and to wage it more consistently and thoroughly. These people objectively need leadership, orientation and direction—even to fight in the best way on terms that are essentially in line with their own views. Our objective cannot realistically be to win them all over to communism—that's not going to happen *en masse*. For most of them it's going to happen, if at all, somewhere down the road. But it isn't

necessary for them to be won to communism to play a very positive and very important role in this battle. But even to do that "on their own terms" they need us to be putting forward our full communist view of this and to be carrying out a healthy process of unity-struggle-unity with them, in relation to this crucial battle against Christian Fascism and reactionary religious fundamentalism in general, and in relation to the largest questions about the way the world is, why it is the way it is, and how there could be a radically different and far better world.

NOTES:

1. See "The Center—Can It Hold? The Pyramid as Two Ladders" in *Revolution* #4, May 29, 2005.

2. See "The Coming Civil War and Repolarization for Revolution in the Present Era," *Revolutionary Worker* #1274, April 10, 2005.

3. See "The Coming Civil War and Repolarization for Revolution in the Present Era," *Revolutionary Worker* #1274, April 10, 2005.

4. The statement appeared in *Revolutionary Worker* #1258, Nov. 14, 2004.

5. This is a reference to the book *Mothers in the Fatherland*, by Claudia Koonz. In this book Koonz examines how a number of women played prominent roles in organizing other women around the program of Hitler and the Nazis in Germany in the 1930s—in particular around the Nazi "ideal" of a woman as a breeder of her husband's children and keeper of his home, and as an embodiment and bearer of religious tradition and training. This was captured in the Nazi slogan "Kinder, Küche, Kirche" (Children, Kitchen, Church).

6. *Revolution: Why It's Necessary, Why It's Possible, What It's All About* is available in VHS or DVD from Three Q Productions (threeqvideo.com).

7. *Bob Avakian, Preaching From a Pulpit of Bones: We Need Morality But Not Traditional Morality* (New York: Banner Press, 1999); "God Doesn't Exist—And We Need Liberation Without Gods" and a second talk, "Christianity and Society—the Old Testament and the New Testament, Resistance and Revolution," are available online as audio downloads at bobavakian.net.

Available from:

RCP Publications
P.O. Box 3486
Chicago, IL 60654

773-227-4066
rcppubs@hotmail.com

revcom.us