



REVOLUTION

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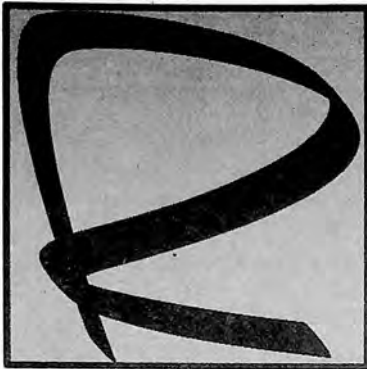
*the newspaper
formerly known as
the Revolutionary Worker*

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REVOLUTION

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Three Main Points

by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP, USA

What do we in the Revolutionary Communist Party want people to learn from all that is exposed and revealed in this newspaper? Mainly, three things:

- 1** *The whole system we now live under is based on exploitation—here and all over the world. It is completely worthless and no basic change for the better can come about until this system is overthrown.*
- 2** *Many different groups will protest and rebel against things this system does, and these protests and rebellions should be supported and strengthened. Yet it is only those with nothing to lose but their chains who can be the backbone of a struggle to actually overthrow this system and create a new system that will put an end to exploitation and help pave the way to a whole new world.*
- 3** *Such a revolutionary struggle is possible. There is a political Party that can lead such a struggle, a political Party that speaks and acts for those with nothing to lose but their chains: The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA.*

This Party has the vision, the program, the leadership, and the organizational principles to unite those who must be united and enable them to do what must be done. There is a challenge for all those who would like to see such a revolution, those with a burning desire to see a drastic change for the better, all those who dare to dream and to act to bring about a completely new and better world: Support this Party, join this Party, spread its message and its organized strength, and prepare the ground for a revolutionary rising that has a solid basis and a real chance of winning.

Subscribe! See page 15

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**Our Vanguard is the
Revolutionary Communist Party
Our Leader is Chairman Avakian**

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Help us promote this address and our website everywhere. Link to it online. Put it boldly on leaflets, signs and wherever it can be seen.

In the period ahead, our website will be going through further changes. At the same time,

we want everyone to know that our old address (rwor.org) will continue to function—now and on into the future. We will not cause existing links to break. And we intend to keep the full archives of the Revolutionary Worker available online. People who have bookmarked our site, its "what's new" page, and specific articles will continue to connect.

To Our Readers: In keeping with our regular publication schedule, *Revolution* will not be published next week. The next issue, #11, will be dated August 14, 2005 and will appear during the week of August 8.

GET ORGANIZED

to Drive Out the Bush Regime— Because the World Can't Wait!

Submitted by comrades involved with The World Can't Wait—Drive Out The Bush Regime

"History is full of examples where people who had right on their side fought against tremendous odds and were victorious. And it is also full of examples of people passively hoping to wait it out, only to get swallowed up by a horror beyond what they ever imagined. The future is unwritten. WHICH ONE WE GET IS UP TO US."

—from the call "The World Can't Wait! Drive Out The Bush Regime! Mobilize November 2!"

From our beginning experience in distributing hundreds of thousands of the calls for November 2, it is clear to us that millions and millions of people are deeply distressed and outraged about the state of things. They have been desperately looking for a vehicle to stop all this but have not been able to find it. Indeed, the very people in power they are looking toward have done nothing but sell them out on everything that really matters and have left them paralyzed and demobilized.

Politics as usual can not meet the enormity of the challenge and people know it.

But there IS a road forward. Listen to the Call for November 2, 2005:

"We, in our millions, must and can take responsibility to change the course of history.

"To that end, on November 2, the first anniversary of Bush's 'reelection,' we will take the first major step in this by organizing a truly massive day of resistance all over this country. People everywhere will walk out of school, they will take off work, they will come to the downtowns and town squares and set out from there, going through the streets and calling on many more to JOIN US. They will repudiate this criminal regime, making a powerful statement: 'NO! THIS REGIME DOES NOT REPRESENT US! AND WE WILL DRIVE IT OUT!'

"...November 2 will be the beginning—a giant first step in forcing Bush to step down, and a powerful announcement that we will not stop until he does so—and it will join with and give support and heart to people all over the globe who so urgently need and want this regime to be stopped."

This is the way—the only way—to respond on a level commensurate with this situation, to reach the hearts of millions who are deeply anxious and outraged, and to break the grip of current "political alternatives" that are so suffocating and paralyzing.

There is heavy lifting and hard work to be done to accomplish this—to create something that does not yet exist. But we CAN do this, if we listen not to the voices of "keep your head low and trim your sails to what may seem safe and easy," but to the millions of people who are looking for leadership and a way to bust out of this bad dynamic. Hundreds of people can step forward right now to assume responsibility for organizing thousands and then tens of thousands more, and getting the word to literally millions of people who abhor what the Bush regime is doing here and around the world.

Again, our experience in going to the people and distributing over a quarter of a million of the call for Nov. 2 shows that people are looking for this. But there are pressing needs to be met *including the need to get organized.*

So, where to begin?

Continued on page 4

...that which you will not resist and mobilize to stop,
you will learn—or be forced—to accept...

The world can't wait!
Drive out the Bush regime! Mobilize for
November 2, 2005



Guantánamo, 2003.

Mshan neighborhood of Basra,
Iraq, March 22, 2003.



Abu Ghraib



AP Photo/Nabil El Jourana

Rove, Roberts and the Relentless Power Drive of the Christian Fascists... or, Don't Get Fooled Again!

The Karl Rove scandal has raised hopes among some that Bush is stumbling—and that in particular the drive to power of the Christian Fascists, which has been relentlessly advancing under Bush's aegis, may now be losing steam. We'll get to Rove—and to the nomination of John Roberts to the Supreme Court—in a minute. But first let's take a look at those hopes in light of some recent history.

Remember the elections of 1998? After months of attacks on Bill Clinton, the Republican totals in Congress actually went down. Newt Gingrich resigned in disgrace, and the political commentators all said that this showed that Bill Clinton would now surely NOT be impeached. And what happened? The Republicans, with the Christian Fascists as the driving force within them, impeached him anyway, and came very close to driving Clinton from office.

Or take the elections of 2000. When the corruption in Florida emerged, and when the Florida Supreme Court called for a recount, everyone said that the Republicans wouldn't dare just outright steal the election. But what did they do? They sent thugs down to Florida to literally break up the recount and then used their own U.S. Supreme Court justices to overrule the Florida courts and give the office to Bush.

And then there's the case of General William G. "Jerry"

Boykin, the high-ranking Christian fanatic who gave speeches, while in uniform, attacking Islam and saying that God chose George W. Bush to be president. The outcry was great: surely Boykin would be punished. So what happened? Boykin was actually promoted by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. A few months later, when Rumsfeld himself came under fire for the torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo, the media wise men speculated that he'd have to resign. Last time we looked, though, Rumsfeld was still there, and the war and the inhumanity drive on.

The lesson here is that these people are relentless. Struggles within the normal political framework have not stopped them from advancing their agenda. They have been marching on a certain trajectory and while they may zig and zag once in a while, generally speaking, they prefer the steamroller method. Within that Republican steamroller, the Christian Fascist hard core a) sets the terms and tone for the rest of the Republicans, and b) continues to put and keep their dedicated followers in high positions of power. And please, everybody, note well and *do not forget*: this hard core has a DIFFERENT and THEOCRATIC-FASCIST VISION of how everything should be—from politics to law, from family and intimate relations to schools, from science to cul-

ture—and they are not going to stop until they get that vision—or are defeated. And again—their whole history up to now, as well as the trajectory they are on, strongly argues that they cannot and will not be defeated without a very sharp struggle that ruptures with that framework of politics as usual.

Whatever happens to Karl Rove, those overriding facts—their relentlessness, and what it will take to *really* stop them—will not change. As for John Roberts, after days of praise in Congress and the media for his cool "judicial temperament" and a ton of irrelevant bullshit, it comes to light in the Friday, July 22 *New York Times* (buried on page 14), that the Bush clique worked for a full year to assure the Christian Fascists that Roberts is "one of them," and that he was the best choice tactically to get (another) "one of them" onto the court.

In sum, there is a deadly and horrific trajectory in this country. The people behind it are locked in on a vision and putting their people (and allies) into high positions of power. And this trajectory will not get reversed by anything less than a struggle from below of a magnitude not seen for generations.

GET ORGANIZED

to Drive Out the Bush Regime—

Because the World Can't Wait!

Submitted by comrades involved with The World Can't Wait—Drive Out The Bush Regime

To the Masses

"To the masses" has to be our Watchword! Copies of the call have to get out to millions of people and *this act itself must become a mass movement*—thousands of people have to get involved in getting this out all summer long, to concerts, summer festivals, year-round high schools, churches and gyms. It has to get out in the big cities but also find its way to the suburbs, exurbs and rural areas, letting people know that they are not as alone as they think. And with this call there need to be organizing kits, going out in the thousands, containing literature, T-shirts, stickers, handcards, etc. and instructions on how to get hooked up with the organizers. Ads in the alternative press need to be purchased immediately and the ways have to be found to get this message contending in the mainstream media beginning now, and rising to a crescendo in the fall. Large amounts of money have to be raised. People have poured their hearts and considerable finances to the democrats—which has done nothing but funnel precious resources and energies into demobilizing the opposition. It's time people stopped paying this price and begin donating to what will really make a difference.

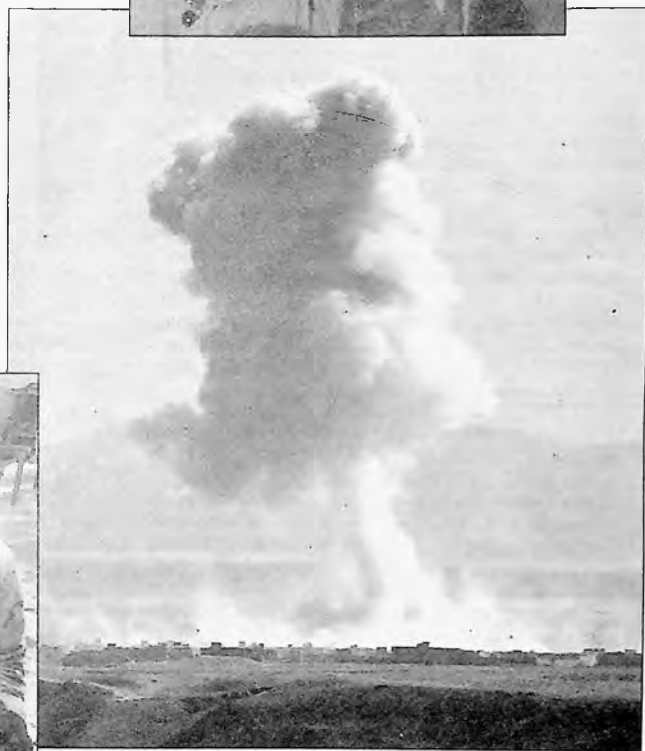
To do this, again, requires organization. Meetings have to be called, of all kinds. Well-publicized meetings where the word gets out broadly in advance, as well as meetings called by teams that are out leafletting for that very day ("meet us at Starbucks at 7 tonight and bring your friends"). And all the meetings have to be well organized! People who come should be respected as the potential organizers that they are—they are there because they agree with the call, and they must be given concrete ways to get involved with the overall effort. There must be task forces or subcommittees that can harness their creativity, their energies, their thinking and their ties to *systematically* spread this message. People must not come away from meetings with the feeling that "this would be nice if we could do it, but I don't see how it will happen"—instead, they must see *and be able to quickly plug into* a well-organized and serious operation aimed at making something grand really happen.

And all this must be done NOW to get this massively known over the summer and to create the organizational platform to fight this through in the fall on a whole other level.

We are calling on all fighters and dreamers to throw away wishful thinking, passivity, and pessimism and to throw in everything you have at a time when the very future is in the balance. The task may seem huge—hell, it IS huge—but its possibility lies in its necessity and in the hearts and minds of millions who do not want to live this way, who do not want to be ruled (and to be complicit in brutally ruling over the rest of the world) in this way—and who therefore can be won to see themselves acting consciously in a life and death political battle for a future that hangs in the balance. When that genie is set free of what has been bottling it up miracles are possible—if we dare to take the responsibility.



AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais



AP Photo/Marco Di Luino

Village of Khanaqa, near Kabul, Afghanistan, November 7, 2001.



AP Photo/Jim MacMillan

Raid by U.S. and Iraqi armies in Mosul, January 31.

In the Name of Safety...

Or How the London Police Executed Jean Charles de Menezes

In the name of "protecting people's safety," the London police pumped five bullets at point-blank range into the head of 27-year-old Jean Charles de Menezes in the middle of a crowded subway station on July 22.

British officials immediately declared the police blew Menezes away because he was "involved" with the attempted bombings in London the day before and maybe the earlier bombings on July 7. "The only way to deal with this is to shoot to the head," said the London police commissioner.

No questioning, no trial—taking a cue from Bush & Co.'s global manhunts and commando operations, the London police coldly assassinated a person in front of other horrified subway passengers.

Then the *truth* came out. Menezes had *nothing* to do with the

bombings. He was an immigrant from the city of Gonzaga in Brazil, an electrician on his way to work when he got his brains blown out by official assassins acting in the name of "people's safety."

And even *after* this truth came out, the London police said they intend to continue with their "shoot-to-kill" policy on "terrorist suspects."

What does this cold-blooded murder say about the "war on terror" of Bush and his poodle Blair—waged in the name of "protecting people's safety"? Can these imperialistic gangsters be allowed to continue killing, oppressing and brutalizing people around the world? Doesn't the murder of Jean Charles de Menezes add one more reason to why people should say: The World Can't Wait — Drive Out the Bush Regime!



Jean Charles de Menezes (right) with friends.

Get in touch with "The World Can't Wait" at worldcantwait.org

RC4 TOUR HITS LOS ANGELES

Revolution received the following correspondence from The Los Angeles Writers Collective.

A brief look into the first stop of the RC4 tour:

Los Angeles Saturday, July 23—The RC4 tour hit the ground running this week in Los Angeles.

Stirring controversy wherever they spoke—on the airwaves, in house meetings, and at a full panel discussion at Cal State Dominguez Hills—the RC4 kicked off their visit here, bringing straight to the people the compelling vision of the communist revolution developed by Bob Avakian.

The RC4 made a deep case as to why people have no interests in protecting or putting up with this rotten system. And they challenged people to take up the fight for the emancipation of all of humanity through communist revolution.

They spoke to the need—and the *real possibility*—for the masses of people in the ghettos and barrios, the factories and neighborhoods—the masses of oppressed and proletarian people—to rise to the challenge of leading millions and millions of people in this country to break the chains that are literally choking this planet and keeping people all over the world trapped in a horrible life.

In a word they challenged all who heard them to become the emancipators of humanity. And they struggled hard—and with a lot of love—for people to cast aside the mental chains that hold them back from fulfilling this great need.

LIBERATION WITHOUT GOD

At the Cal State panel, Akil Bomani spoke passionately and powerfully about how he gave up religion to take up communism after reading Bob Avakian's *Preaching From a Pulpit of Bones* that contrasted Biblical morality and communist morality:

"I was introduced to the revolutionary vision of communism, and this all sparked my criticism of the world and the way out of all of this madness.

"It was when I myself took to doing something that the Bible and Christianity explicitly forbids—that is questioning reality and asking why and how—it was then that I was able to take a critical look at the world, at this system and at the immense and unspeakable anguish it has caused billions to this day.

"I was able take a critical look at the prospects of actually overthrowing this system and end all the forms of exploitation and oppression attached to this system, forms of exploitation and oppression that the Bible does not denounce but upholds in many ways. I was able to take a critical look at how that could actually be done and at the writings of Bob Avakian."

REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

The RC4 confronted the nationalism and identity politics that are so prevalent among the masses—and struggled with people to look at things from the point of view of how we're going to free all of humanity—a communist viewpoint—and not from the viewpoint of freeing "my nation, my people"—and ultimately the "me first" mentality.

Revolutionary leadership and what qualifies someone to be a leader was a hot question. Some people made the argument that they don't want to follow a "white man."

Carl Dix said that the caliber of a leader should be judged by the content of what they are bringing forward, not by their nationality. If people were locked in a horrible prison for life and someone came along who knew the way out, would the prisoners say, well I don't want to know how to get out of here because you are the wrong nationality!

"Look, here's the deal. There is a

leader who has come forward, who is pointing to the way out of this, who is pointing to a future that we can get to, and is showing us the way to get there.

"The challenge for people is to look at the content of what the leader is bringing forward. That's what we gotta grab hold of. Because if you want to get out of all this mess the criteria for leadership is not, what nationality is the leader...what race...or what gender. But instead, what is the content of the vision that leader is putting forward, and, what is the program they're putting forward to realize that?"

"You see, that is the challenge. We are not saying, 'follow Bob Avakian blindly' or 'follow the RCP blindly.' We're saying, grapple with the content of the vision of the future society being brought forward. And grapple with the program that's being brought forward to realize this."

Clyde Young came at this same question from another angle. He said when a leader of the caliber of Bob Avakian comes forward, that is something to celebrate. He said that Bob Avakian is the flower and fruit of the struggle of the masses during the 1960s, but he's much more than that. Bob Avakian is someone who has gone on to develop the revolutionary science of communism—critically building on the achievements of the past, re-envisioning socialist society under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and taking up problems of how to build a revolutionary movement of millions and millions of people that can actually transform dreams into reality.

"Leaders like Bob Avakian are very rare and special leaders. When an outstanding leader comes forward like this I think it is very important for people to recognize that leader and to learn as much as they can from that leader, to promote that leader, and to defend that leader..."

"Some people have said to us: 'This is just going to mean we just have to go along with everything he says and it leaves no room for us to contribute and for us to be part of the revolutionary struggle and to bring our ideas, and creativity to the table.'

"But I think that it is important to recognize that when revolutionary leaders like this come forward—it opens up the possibility for the masses of people's creativity and the masses of people themselves to come forward and contribute on a whole other level, in a whole other way than they can under this system.

"That is, unity between people coming forward and learning from leaders, but at the same time contributing as much as they possibly can to the revolutionary struggle—contributing their understanding and contributing all they can to the revolutionary struggle as well—there is that dialectic, back and forth..."

In short, Clyde made the point that when a leader like this emerges they are inextricably linked to the masses realizing their revolutionary potential—and ultimately the people of the world realizing the potential of moving to a communist society.

Many questions popped from the audience: A Black youth wanted to know "What is the proletariat?" He also asked, "So how you gonna reach the majority of proletarians when most of them are all religious and it's clear to me that none of you guys are religious, so how are you gonna sway them to be communists?"

Another person focused on the question of the proletariat in power and wanted to know how the RCP would not allow "power to corrupt," but instead stay on the road to communism.

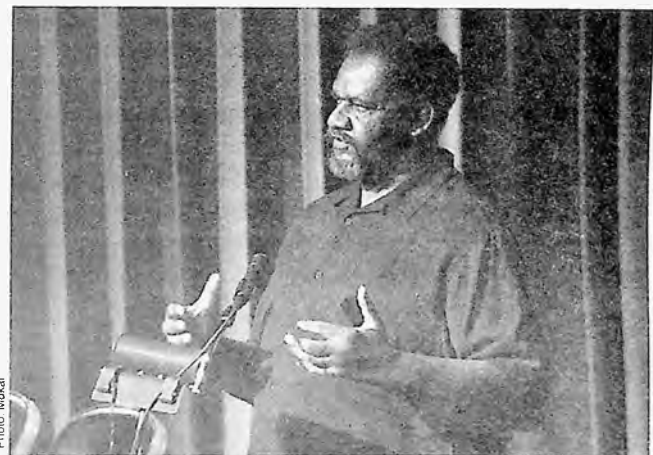
Later, someone else asked about the role of immigrants in the revolution given that many of them are undocumented.



Left to right: Revolution correspondent Akil Bomani, Joe Veale, and Revolution correspondent Luciente Zamora, Los Angeles, July 23.



Carl Dix.



Clyde Young, Los Angeles, July 23.

Joe Veale told *Revolution* what this tour is aimed at trying to bring forward:

"Look, the problem in the world is that there is all this wealth, all this technology that's controlled and dominated by a class of capitalists.

"All this technology and all this human wisdom could be used to benefit the masses here and all over the world.

"Everybody on this planet could have a decent life: no one has to go cold during the wintertime, no one has to go hungry, no one has to die for lack of water, everybody could read and write and be enriched in sports and culture.

"And the only thing standing in the way of that are these capitalists who rip off all this wealth, and use it to enrich this system.

"We need a revolutionary communist movement that is in the struggle and knows that this is the problem—we need millions and millions of people who realize that if the masses could take power and come together to share in all of this wealth and knowledge in a collective way—this represents the solution and the way out. So this is a part of what this tour is about—to begin to build the kind of

revolutionary communist consciousness out here now that can prepare to lead the masses to change the world."

The RC4 TOUR WILL BE IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA THROUGH THE END OF JULY.

NEXT STOPS: NEW YORK AND CHICAGO. WATCH THE RC4 WEBSITE www.rc4tour.info FOR NEWS.

E-mail: rc_speaks@yahoo.com SUPPORT THE RC4 TOUR: send checks and money orders to:

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"A Leap of Faith" and a Leap to Rational Two Very Different Kinds of Leaps, Two Radically Different Worldviews and

by Bob Avakian

EDITORS' NOTE: This article was written by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, in response to a letter that was sent to him via RCP Publications. In addition to attacking communism, that letter also argued against the scientific viewpoint and method and insisted that atheism is just another form of religion. This article by Chairman Avakian speaks to a number of points in that letter but focuses on the fundamental difference between a communist and scientific outlook and method on the one hand and, on the other hand, a religious worldview which relies on "leaps of faith."

In the next issue of *Revolution* we will resume publication of excerpts from various talks by Bob Avakian.

Not long ago I received a letter from someone who was provoked by hearing parts of my talk, "God Does Not Exist—We Need Liberation Without Gods," that were played by Michael Slate on Pacifica radio station KPFFK in Los Angeles.¹ In that letter, there are many distortions. Among other things, the writer of this letter claims that I referred to "Christianity" as an "evil," when in fact what this talk was identifying as "evil" was not Christianity itself but a fanatical biblical-literalist Christian fundamentalism whose political and ideological content indeed amount to a form of fascism (and so is very rightly referred to as Christian Fascism). That talk drew a very clear and firm distinction between this Christian Fascism, on the one hand, and other forms of Christian (and other religious) views, on the other hand. It made a point of emphasizing that, while communists, as scientific atheists, are opposed *philosophically and ideologically* to all forms of religious worldviews, we recognize and appreciate the fact that among Christians and people with other religious beliefs there are many who have taken important, indeed courageous and inspiring, stands in the struggle against various forms of oppression; that there are many more who can be won to that stand; and that it is vitally important to develop and strengthen unity with such people, even as we continue to struggle with them over questions of world outlook and political objectives.

The Historical Experience of Socialism, and Communist Principles

Not only does this letter misrepresent what my talk said about religion, but it also contains many other distortions, including on the history of the communist movement internationally and the experience of socialist society. It repeats, in their more crude forms, the attacks and slanders promoted by the ruling class and reactionary politicians, institutions and media, etc., against the Soviet Union, during the time of Lenin as well as Stalin, and against China during the period of Mao's leadership (and it brings up Cambodia under Pol Pot, which in reality was not at all an example of socialism or communism).² Of course, the historical experience of socialist society and of the communist move-

ment is very complex and is marked by contradiction: in what has been the first round in the existence of socialist states, in the Soviet Union and China, during the 20th century (and in the overall experience of the international communist movement), by far the main aspect has been the inspiring achievements, pointing to and carving out crucial parts of the path toward the abolition of all relations of exploitation and oppression, and toward the eventual emancipation of humanity, all over the globe; but there have also been real mistakes and shortcomings and there have been ways in which at times the actions and even the thinking of communists have failed to correspond and live up fully to the aims, methods, and principles of communism.

This experience is something I have devoted a great deal of attention and effort to analyzing, and drawing important lessons from, even while upholding what in reality has been the main and overwhelming aspect of this experience: its positive and emancipating reality.³ And further excavation and summation (analysis and synthesis, as we communists say) of this experience, while popularizing its great achievements—and drawing lessons for the future from all this—is something that communists throughout the world must continue to take up as a crucial responsibility. (Here it is important to note that, in addition to the work I have done and am continuing to do in this regard, our Party has launched and is leading an effort to *Set the Record Straight* with regard to this whole experience, and this will increasingly involve putting before growing numbers of people an actual, scientific summation of this experience, as more is continually dug into and summed up about it: its main, positive aspect, as well as the secondary but important summation of significant errors and shortcomings, and the synthesis of the key lessons from all this).

Also among its other distortions, this letter in response to my talk on religion is also fundamentally and crudely wrong in its attempted discussion of communist morality—or its claim that there is no such thing, that communists can have no morality. In a number of writings, and in an extensive way in my book *Preaching From a Pulpit of Bones*,⁴ I have spoken to some basic aspects and expressions of commu-

nist morality and contrasted its liberating principles with the reactionary and enslaving nature and content of the morality that characterizes the capitalist-imperialist system and "traditional morality" in general, including that based on the actual content of the Bible. (Among other things, the writer of this letter refers, mockingly and with sarcasm, to the idea that "Christians oppress women and homosexuals." Once again, the point is not that "Christians" in general do this but it is an undeniable fact that the Christian Bible promotes the oppression of women and gay people, and if anyone insists on acting according to a literal reading of the Bible, that person will certainly be joining in "oppress[ing] women and homosexuals." To see the truth of this, all you have to do is actually read the Bible, including not only the Old Testament—where it is said that homosexuals must be put to death [Leviticus 20:13] and where it *not only defends but calls for* the raping of women and carrying them off as prizes of war [to cite just one example: Numbers 31:15-18]—but also the New Testament, for example many of the Epistles of Paul, where he insists on the inferior status of women and demands that they be under the domination of men.)

This letter also baldly asserts that communists can have nothing to say—or nothing that is meaningful (or "intelligent")—about such questions as beauty and love. This, too, is completely wrong. In the Draft Programme of our Party, in our position paper on the question of homosexuality, in our newspaper, *Revolution*, and in many of my talks and writings—including my memoir, *From Ike to Mao and Beyond, My Journey from Mainstream America to Revolutionary Communist and the Book Marxism and the Call of the Future* (which consists of conversations between me and Bill Martin, a professor of philosophy and radical social theorist, on questions of ethics, history, and politics) as well as the just-published book of mine, *Observations on Art and Culture, Science and Philosophy*—there is considerable discussion of questions of beauty and love, as well as of ethics and morals, in which the communist viewpoint is clearly expressed (and I will leave it to the reader to consider whether what is said about these questions in those works is meaningful, or "intelligent").

Religion is Religion, Communism is Scientific

But what I want to focus on here—because it is a very important point of distortion which not only characterizes this letter but is much more broadly promoted, particularly by religious fundamentalists, and is the source of considerable confusion and misunderstanding—is the insistence that communism (and atheism generally) is actually just another form of

1. Audio files of this talk are available online at bobavakian.net

2. As for Pol Pot, in reality, he was not a communist and Cambodia under his rule represents something very different from, and actually opposed to, a revolutionary, socialist country on the road to communism. For analysis, from the communist (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) standpoint, of what was wrong with the Pol Pot regime and how it represented a fundamental departure from communism, see "Condescending Saviours: What Went Wrong with the Pol Pot Regime" in *A World To Win* (1999/25), available online at awt.org

3. See *Conquer the World? The International Proletariat Must and Will in Revolution* magazine No. 50 (December 1981), and *Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism*, excerpted in the *Revolutionary Worker* from August 2004 through March 2005. These talks, as well as many more writings and texts of talks by Bob Avakian which deal with many important questions relating to communism and the experience of socialist society so far, are available online at revcom.us

4. *Preaching from a Pulpit of Bones: We Need Morality, But Not Traditional Morality* (Chicago: Banner Press, 1999).

Knowledge:

Methods

religion and that in fact not only communism but all scientific thinking involves just as much a "leap of faith" as does religion. In this article, I will discuss how this is completely wrong and will examine the crucial differences between religion and "leaps of faith," on the one hand, and science and the scientific method—including communism, with its thorough, systematic and comprehensive scientific outlook and method—on the other hand.

This claim that communism (and more generally a scientific outlook and method) is just another form of religion is concentrated in the following from this letter:

"I hope you're not offended that I call your atheism faith. I'm sure you realize atheism is a faith system too. And since you've pinned you're [sic] hope on its truthfulness, we can call it your religion. How about that!? Bob Avakian is a religious man!"

"You probably realize what most evolutionists don't since no one was there to record the Big Bang, it too is just as much a leap of faith as the biblical version of creation. But no worries, you can always make your case stronger by stating forcefully, 'Evolution is a fact!'"

The heart of the matter here—and what is fundamentally wrong in the viewpoint of the writer of this letter—is the attempt to distort what is involved in the application of a scientific method and approach, in the process of scientific investigation and analysis and in the drawing of scientifically based conclusions. More specifically, what is fundamentally wrong is the attempt to say that the actual leaps that are involved in arriving at *rational knowledge of things*—including through the application of the scientific method—somehow amount to the *same thing* as "leaps of faith" that are characteristic of religion. In fact, these are profoundly and radically *different kinds* of "leaps," and digging into the difference will not only further expose the confusion and outright distortions and misrepresentations in this letter, and in the method of thinking of its author, but much more importantly can help clarify the fundamental difference between a scientific and a religious approach to reality and to changing—or not changing—reality, including human society.

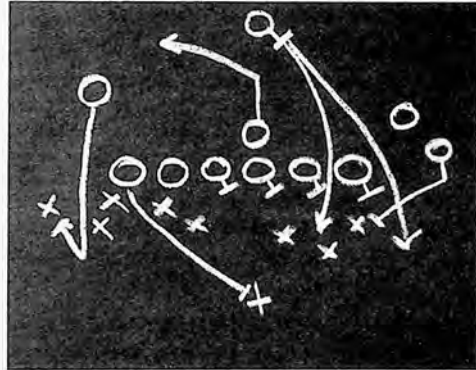
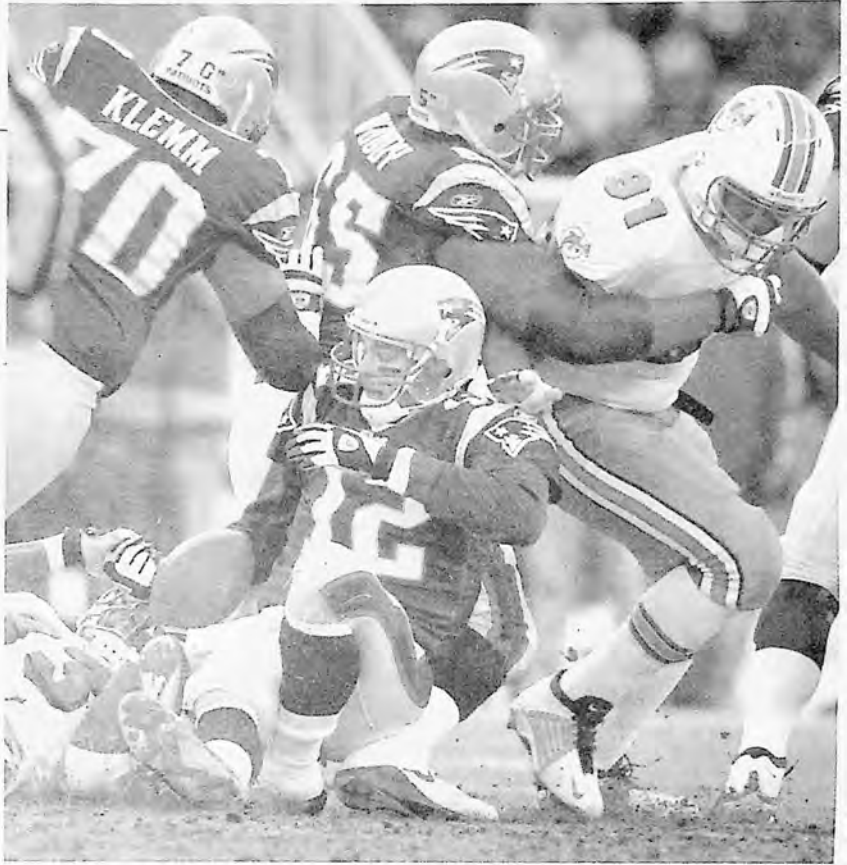
The Leap From Perceptual to Rational Knowledge

As Mao Tsetung pointed out in his important philosophical works, such as "On Practice," in the gaining (or accumulation) of knowledge by people, there are two basic stages: The first is the stage of *perceptual knowledge*, and the second stage is that of *rational knowledge*. And arriving at the second stage, of rational knowledge, not only involves and requires building on what is learned through the first (perceptual) stage but also making a *leap* in *systematizing* what is perceived:

identifying the "patterns" in what is perceived and the essential character and basic identity of things that lie beyond the outward appearance of things. Getting into this further, and using some examples from "everyday life" can help illustrate this fundamental point. It can make more clear the fundamental difference between the actual acquiring of rational knowledge, through a leap from perceptual knowledge to rational knowledge, and a religious "leap of faith" which does not, and cannot, lead to rational knowledge.

As Mao also pointed out, when we first encounter anything, we see it in only a partial and scattered way, observing some of its features but not what "ties them together"—what is the essential character of something, which gives to that thing its identity as such—and how it is both different from and at the same time relates to *other* things. This is the stage of simply *perceiving* something, of *perceptual knowledge*. For example, many people who are not "into football" have commented that, in looking at a game of football (on television, for example) it just appears that a lot of very bulked-up guys, wearing a lot of strange equipment, are running around and violently banging into and jumping in piles on each other! But, if you watch football for a while and persevere in attempting to grasp what is actually going on, you can begin to see the "patterns" involved, and the "rules" and "laws" that actually govern and give shape and identity to what is happening. Football fans are familiar with the basic nature and essential character of the game, with its "rules" and "laws," and can readily offer all kinds of opinions and judgments about what is going on, based on an understanding of all this. But, of course, when such fans first started watching football themselves, they were not familiar with all this and it seemed to them, too, to be a bunch of random, arbitrary and "disjointed" activity. So what is involved in moving from that to an understanding of the nature of this game and its governing "rules" and "laws" is a matter of *accumulating more and more perceptual knowledge* and then making a *leap*, "putting this together" and *systematizing* it—analyzing it and making a *synthesis* of what is at the heart of it, what are the key "patterns"

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When we first encounter anything, we see it in only a partial and scattered way, observing some of its features but not what "ties them together"—what is the essential character of something, which gives to that thing its identity as such—and how it is both different from and at the same time relates to *other* things. This is the stage of simply perceiving something, of *perceptual knowledge*. For example, many people who are not "into football" have commented that, in looking at a game of football [on television, for example] it just appears that a lot of very bulked-up guys, wearing a lot of strange equipment, are running around and violently banging into and jumping in piles on each other! But, if you watch football for a while and persevere in attempting to grasp what is actually going on, you can begin to see the "patterns" involved, and the "rules" and "laws" that actually govern and give shape and identity to what is happening.

"A Leap of Faith" and a Leap to Rational Knowledge: Two Very Different Kinds of Leaps Two Radically Different Worldviews and Methods

Continued from page 7 involved and what "ties it all together" and gives this game its character as "football." Now, quite often this actual leap, from perceptual to rational knowledge, goes on largely unconsciously after a certain point—in many cases, the person involved is not aware of consciously making this leap to rational knowledge—but it is a real leap nonetheless and leads to a *higher form* of understanding, *rational knowledge*. (Whether it is worth it to engage in the process and effort of moving from perceptual knowledge to rational knowledge with regard to football is, of course, something that is culturally and socially influenced, and also involves matters of personal preference within that context—and I will not offer any opinions or judgements about this, one way or the other, here!)

But let's contrast this kind of leap—a leap from perceptual to rational knowledge of real things—to a "leap of faith." Let us imagine someone saying, "I don't have to watch football, or listen to explanations about it, I can come to understand it because 'god will reveal it to me.'" That would be putting forward a "leap of faith" as the way to acquire knowledge of something (in this case football). But, in fact, this kind of "leap" will not lead to actual knowledge of real things, nor can it be tested by applying means and methods that relate to the actual world of real things—there is no way to test that person's assertion that "god will reveal" this knowledge to them, there can be no evidence of this, outside of their own claim about it. But I certainly wouldn't advise you to be guided by that kind of "knowledge," supposedly arrived at through that kind of "leap of faith," if you are going to Las Vegas or Atlantic City to bet on football games!

Let's take another example: a trial in which someone is accused of robbery. The prosecutor will try to present evidence (witness testimony and/or other evidence) which shows that the defendant was at the place where the robbery occurred, at the time it occurred, and perhaps that the defendant was found in possession of a weapon that is very much like (or even identical to) the weapon used in the robbery, and so on. On the other side, the defense may try to show (through witness testimony, etc.) that the defendant was somewhere else entirely at the time the robbery occurred, and/or that the weapon the defendant was found with is in fact a *different* weapon than the one used in the robbery, and so on. When the jury moves to render a verdict, they will be called on to *make a leap* from perceptual to rational knowledge—to "sift through" the testimony and other facts and get to the *essence* of what is shown by that evidence. Of course, the jury may do this poorly—they may be influenced by prejudices, particularly against the defendant, and/or they may simply make a mistake in their attempt to determine the "patterns" and the "essential reality" of what has been presented to them—but that does not change the fact that what is required, what they are called on to do, is precisely to make a *leap* from facts presented (testimony, etc.) to a conclusion about *what those facts reveal that is essential about what is at issue* (whether or not the defendant committed the robbery). Once again, what is involved is a *leap* from

perceptual knowledge to rational knowledge.

If, for example, the defense presents 10 witnesses, including people who have no relation to the defendant, who testify that, at the time the robbery was committed, they are *certain* that they saw the defendant in a different location entirely from where the robbery occurred—and especially if the prosecution is not able to "shake" those witnesses with regard to this testimony—then it is *only logical* to conclude that the defendant did not commit the robbery and must be found not guilty. But the important thing, in relation to the points being discussed here, is to recognize that what is involved in arriving at that verdict is "drawing a conclusion from the facts"—which again involves and requires an actual *leap* from perceptual knowledge (hearing the testimony) to rational knowledge (making the determination, drawing the conclusion, that the person could not have committed the robbery). That this is the *only logical conclusion* that could be drawn from the facts presented may tend to "blur" the fact that there is a leap involved—that reaching this conclusion requires going beyond the mere hearing of the facts to "putting the facts together" and *grasping the essence* of what those facts show. And it is important to emphasize that what is involved is precisely a *logical conclusion*—one that is arrived at by applying logical reasoning to enable the leap from perceptual to rational knowledge.

Again, let us contrast this with a "leap of faith." If someone were sitting on the jury and they said, "I know that boy is guilty because 'The Lord told me so'" —that would be the *opposite* of applying logic and reason: It would be a "leap of faith," *as opposed* to the leap from perceptual to rational knowledge—a "leap of faith" that would fly in the face of the facts and of the logical process involved in making a *radically different* kind of leap: a leap from perceptual to rational knowledge. And I don't think I have to make much of an argument that it would not be very desirable to have people on a jury who would be proceeding by making those kinds of "leaps of faith" and determining the fate of someone in that way.

Or, let's take a final example "from everyday life." If a small child observes traffic—and especially if what is involved in the flow of traffic, etc., is explained to the child by an adult—the child will come to see, before too long, that if they step out into moving traffic, they will be badly hurt, or even killed: they will have gone from seeing what at first appears to be the random movement of vehicles, without a definite "pattern" and character, to understanding what the "pattern" and the essential character of this movement of vehicles is, and when it is safe, and not safe, to cross the street. Here again what is involved is the kind of leap from perceptual to rational knowledge that we have seen illustrated in previous examples. But if the adult instructing the child were to tell them, "It is safe to walk out in front of the moving traffic, because 'god will protect you'" —that would be, not a leap from perceptual to rational knowledge, but a "leap of faith" that flies in the face of reason and logic—and would almost certainly have terrible and tragic consequences.

Scientific Knowledge and the Scientific Method

And if this crucial difference between these two radically different kinds of leaps—the leap from perceptual to rational knowledge, as opposed to a "leap of faith"—applies, and is of real importance, in "everyday life," this is so in a concentrated way with regard to scientific knowledge: knowledge that is acquired and tested through the consistent and systematic application of the scientific method—in contrast with "leaps of faith."

The scientific method involves carrying out investigations of reality, including through observation and experimentation, to accumulate facts which then are systematized into a theory which gets to what it is that these facts have in common, what *patterns* they reveal, and what is the essential character of what is involved. Then this theory is *tested* by applying it once more against the standard of what can be learned through further experimentation and observation proceeding according to this theory, to see if the results are consistently in line with what is predicted by this theory. If, in the application of this scientific method, results are obtained—things are observed or results produced through experiments, and so on—that *contradict* the theory; if, for example, things can be shown to happen which this theory predicts *could not* happen; then it must be concluded that the theory is wrong, or at least that it contains flaws (is wrong in some respects). If, however, after repeated testing, from a number of different directions and over a whole period of time, the results continue to be consistently in line with what is predicted by the theory—and no results or observations lead to facts which are in contradiction to the theory, or cannot be explained by it—then it can be concluded that this theory is correct. But, even in achieving the status of a generally accepted scientific theory, any particular theory must not only be subjected to repeated testing but it must also be subjected to review by other scientists, particularly those with knowledge and expertise in the particular field of science that the theory relates to; and if it "passes" that review—if none of these scientists can show that the theory is flawed, or simply wrong, if there are no results which can be shown to contradict the theory and its predictions about reality—then the theory will acquire general acceptance in the scientific community as a valid and true explanation of reality (or that part of reality that the theory deals with).

Now, it is true that the development of scientific theories generally involves the formulation of initial "conjectures" and "preliminary hypotheses" about things—in other words, in a sense scientists often make "informed guesses" about the way something in reality might be, even before they can provide proof of this. But, first of all, even these preliminary hypotheses are themselves based on previously accumulated, and verified, evidence about the way reality actually is—as opposed to "leaps of faith" and religious declarations about things, which we are simply expected to believe without any concrete evidence or the prospect of ever being able to obtain such evidence.

Secondly, scientists take their preliminary hypotheses and systematically test them in the real world, and only on that basis are new scientific facts generated which can then contribute to the development of generally accepted scientific theories.

Of course, scientists can, do, and have made mistakes. This has happened not only with individual scientists but at times even with the scientific community in general and those who are regarded as "experts" and "authorities" in various fields of science. Scientists are after all human beings with limitations; they live in and are part of society, and they are influenced in various ways by the ideas which prevail in society at a given time. At the same time, as further knowledge is acquired—as further experimentation and observation goes on, not only in direct relation to a particular theory but in science, and indeed in the world at large—any particular theory will be subjected to continued testing and review, and it may turn out that new things that are learned call into question parts, or in some cases even all, of a particular theory, and then the theory will have to be modified or even completely discarded. *But the crucial point is this:* The scientific method provides the means for continuing to investigate reality and continuing to learn more about it, and on that basis to correct mistakes that are made.

The understanding of reality that is gained, through the leap from perceptual to rational knowledge, becomes, in turn, the basis, the foundation, from which further perceptual knowledge that is accumulated is analyzed and synthesized to make *further leaps* of this kind (from perceptual to rational knowledge yet again...and then again...). So the acquiring of knowledge—by individuals and by society and humanity overall—is not a "one-time" thing, but an ongoing process. This applies to "everyday life" and it applies in a concentrated way with regard to the conscious and systematic application of the scientific method. This relates to another point Mao emphasized: beyond the leap from perceptual knowledge to rational knowledge, there is a further leap—from rational knowledge to practice, in the course of which material reality is changed and further perceptual knowledge is gained, laying the foundation for a further leap to rational knowledge...and on...and on.

A "Leap of Faith" is a Leap Away From a True Understanding of Reality

In opposition to this, a religious worldview—which insists on a reliance on faith and "leaps of faith" instead of investigation and analysis of the real world and the leap from perceptual to rational knowledge—such a religious worldview cannot lead to a true understanding of reality, and in fact is bound to lead away from such an understanding in fundamental ways. Of course, not all people who are religious are "scriptural literalists"—who, insist on an acceptance of the Bible (or some other scripture of some other religion) as the declared word of a supposed all-powerful and all-knowing supernatural being and therefore the "absolute truth." In fact, there are many religious people who accept a good deal of the



conclusions of science, and there are more than a few who try to reconcile their belief in some kind of supernatural being with an acceptance of the scientific method and its results, as applied to the realm of material existence. At the same time, however, their religious viewpoint insists that there is some other realm, of non-material existence, when in fact there is not; and there has never been and could not be evidence offered for the existence of this non-material realm which could meet the test of scientific investigation. And it is a fact that even those who attempt to reconcile religious belief, of one kind or another, with a general acceptance of the scientific method and the results of applying this method, *cannot consistently do so*, because those religious beliefs are bound to conflict, at certain times and in certain ways, with the conclusions reached by the application of the scientific method.

The Big Bang, Evolution, and Revolution

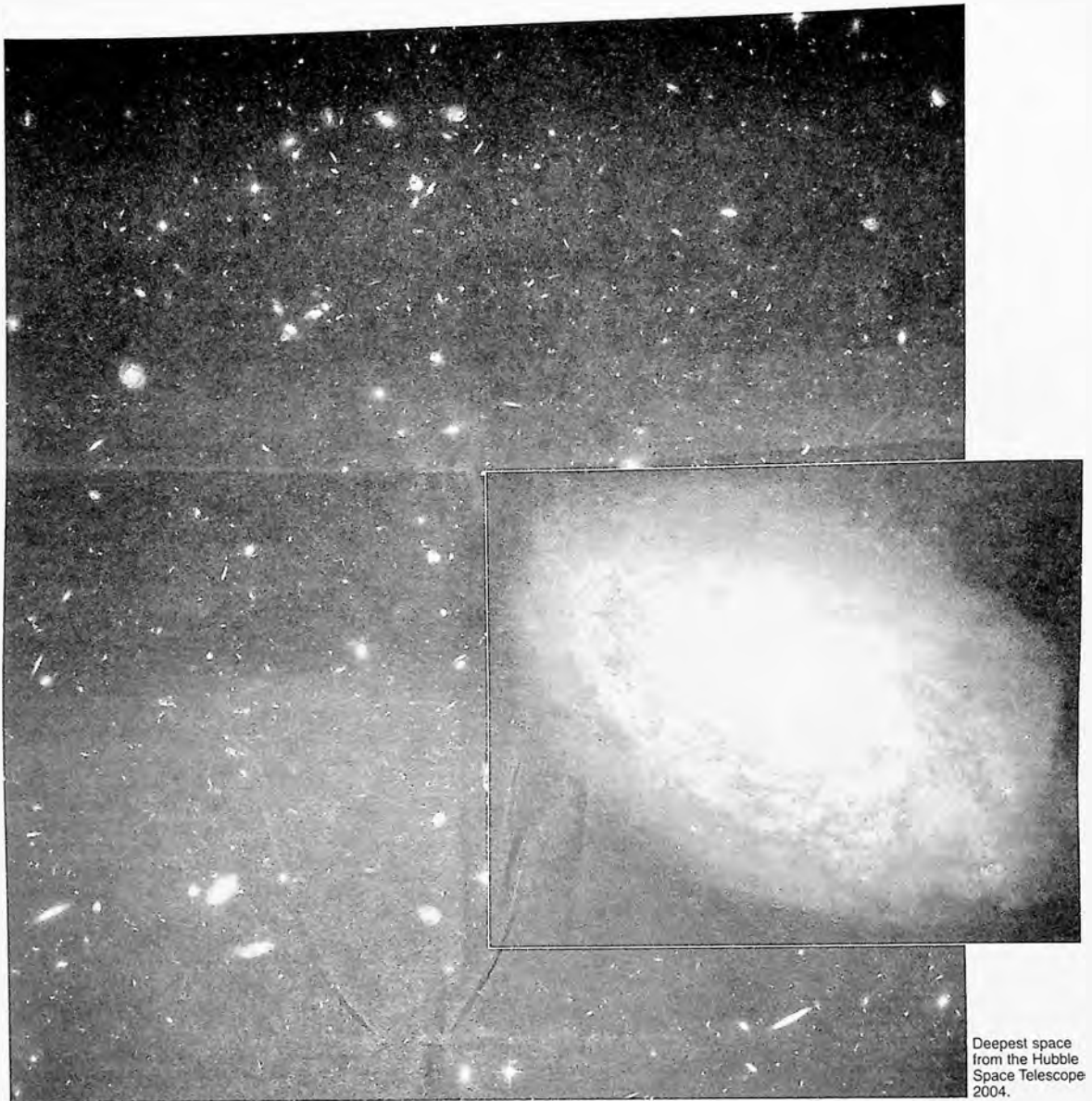
Let's return to a core argument of this letter, as expressed in the part I quoted above. Let's take what has been said here—contrasting the scientific method with a religious worldview, and contrasting in particular the leap from perceptual to rational knowledge with "leaps of faith"—and apply this to examples the writer of this letter emphasizes: *evolution* and the *Big Bang*. It is a fact that evolution and the Big Bang have in common that they are scientific theories that provide explanation for fundamental aspects of the development of the known universe (the universe that is known to human beings) and of our earth and the living things, including human beings, on this earth. (In very basic terms, the Big Bang theory says that the universe, as we know it today, including our earth, originated with a cataclysmic [sudden and violent] explosion of matter billions of years ago.) At the same time, while there is substantial scientific evidence supporting the

But let's contrast this kind of leap—a leap from perceptual to rational knowledge of real things—to a "leap of faith" . . . If a small child observes traffic—and especially if what is involved in the flow of traffic, etc., is explained to the child by an adult—the child will come to see, before too long, that if they step out into moving traffic, they will be badly hurt, or even killed: they will have gone from seeing what at first appears to be the random movement of vehicles, without a definite "pattern" and character, to understanding what the "pattern" and the essential character of this movement of vehicles is, and when it is safe, and not safe, to cross the street. Here again what is involved is the kind of leap from perceptual to rational knowledge that we have seen illustrated in previous examples. But if the adult instructing the child were to tell them, "It is safe to walk out in front of the moving traffic, because 'god will protect you'" —that would be, not a leap from perceptual to rational knowledge, but a "leap of faith" that flies in the face of reason and logic—and would almost certainly have terrible and tragic consequences.

theory of the Big Bang, the theory of evolution is even more firmly established and has been confirmed by over 150 years of scientific testing and review, since the time that Charles Darwin first systematized the theory of evolution in the 19th century. This includes the understanding that human beings evolved out of a long succession of life-forms that have evolved over several billion years, and it includes clear evidence that human beings and the great apes are closely related biologically, and that in fact they shared common ancestor species from which they diverged along separate evolutionary paths only a few million years ago. The very

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If this crucial difference between these two radically different kinds of leaps—the leap from perceptual to rational knowledge, as opposed to a “leap of faith”—applies, and is of real importance, in “everyday life,” this is so in a concentrated way with regard to scientific knowledge: knowledge that is acquired and tested through the consistent and systematic application of the scientific method—in contrast with “leaps of faith” . . .

It is of course true that no human being was around at the time of the Big Bang. But this does not invalidate the Big Bang theory or reduce it to “an article of faith” like the biblically based myth of creation. Human beings come to know many things about reality which we do not directly experience or witness. The Big Bang theory has in fact been formulated and developed through a process [which is ongoing] of proceeding from things that have already been clearly established and demonstrated, from many directions, to be true, and “putting these things together” to draw a conclusion about the larger reality that these things are part of. In other words, there is indeed a leap involved here—but, once again, it is not a “leap of faith,” or anything like it, but a leap from evidence to a conclusion about what the evidence shows to be true.

In short, in developing the Big Bang theory, scientists in the fields of astronomy and physics, and other fields, have proceeded from what they do know—what has been scientifically established and tested and verified—about the universe to draw further inferences and conclusions about the universe, including its origins. And at every stage in the development of this scientific theory (as in all scientific theories), these inferences and conclusions have to be, and are, subjected to further testing in reality before they can be raised to the level of a verified theory and gain general acceptance. The Big Bang theory is a work in progress, but it is not idle speculation: the very questions it poses and explores, the research it stimulates, and the concrete facts it has so far helped to uncover are based on previously accumulated scientific evidence about reality. And this once again marks a profound difference between the scientific method and “religious faith”—since the latter, by definition, does not draw its conclusions, or make its assertions, based on a scientific investigation of and summation of actual reality and cannot, by definition, be tested by scientific methods. In contrast to the biblical creation story of the origin of the universe, the fact is that the Big Bang theory is being continually subjected to further scientific “probing” and analysis. Even though it is true that no human being was present at the time that scientists have calculated that the Big Bang occurred [about 15 billion years ago] the development of new technology—including more powerful telescopes and related instruments, which can be sent into space to record things—has enabled scientists to learn much more about what happened at a time which was shortly after the time when the Big Bang is believed to have occurred, at a point in space far from where our earth now exists.

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important series *The Science of Evolution*, by Ardea Skybreak, which appeared in our Party's newspaper (and which I understand will be published in the not-too-distant future as a book by Insight Press), provides a thorough explanation of the theory of evolution and how it has been demonstrated—repeatedly, from many different directions, and by the application of the scientific method in many different fields—to be true: how continuing scientific investigation and summation, from many different fields of science (including genetics as well as the fossil record and many other “fields of scientific inquiry”) continue to validate and provide further evidence for evolution; how there has not ever been a single scientific discovery or verified fact which in any way would disprove evolution or call it into question; how, in sum, evolution is one of the most well-established and fundamental theories in all of science, one of the most fundamental components of a true understanding of reality. And *The Science of Evolution* also thoroughly exposes and refutes attempts by religious fundamentalists and some others to call evolution into question or to challenge its fundamental truths, through putting forward literal Biblical “Creationism” or “more sophisticated” distortions of reality, such as “Intelligent Design,” which is in fact another variant of “Creationism.”

With this in mind, let's look at the claim by the writer of this letter that evolution, no less than the Big Bang, is “just as much a leap of faith as the biblical version of creation.” From all that has been said so far, it should be clear that this statement is utterly and completely false. Evolution has been shown to be true and has been continually further verified, by application of the scientific method—which, again, involves definite leaps from perceptual to rational knowledge but involves nothing of a “leap of faith.” In fact, “leaps of faith” are alien to, and are in direct conflict with and violation of, the scientific method—and if it can be shown that, as opposed to a logical leap from perceptual to rational knowledge, a scientific theory actually involved “a leap of faith” which by definition could not be substantiated, or even tested, by scientific methods, that theory would immediately be understood to be invalid according to the standards of science and the scientific method. There are no “leaps of faith” in the scientific method, and there is no “leap of faith” in the theory of evolution; its findings and the means by which they have been arrived at (and are continually being further verified and validated), are in direct opposition to “leaps of faith” and to the notion of an understanding of reality that relies on such “leaps of faith” and on “faith” as some kind of means for arriving at the truth about reality. Therefore, when I (and, more significantly for this discussion, the overwhelming, overwhelming majority of scientists in the field of biology and more generally people in the scientific community) declare, without hesitation, that “Evolution is a fact!”—this may annoy the writer of this letter and upset his religious prejudices, but that does not make it any less true that evolution

is, indeed, a fact.

And by now it should also be clear what is fundamentally wrong with the comment by the writer of this letter that, “since no one was there to record the Big Bang, it too is just as much a leap of faith as the biblical version of creation.” While (at least to my understanding) the Big Bang, as a scientific theory, is not as well substantiated and verified as evolution—and while there is definitely much more to be learned about the origins and developments of the universe (or perhaps many different universes), and people in the field of physics (or other sciences) would be the first to say this—it is not at all the case that the theory of the Big Bang is just as much a matter of a “leap of religious faith” as the myth of biblical creation. First of all, the story of creation, as told in the book of Genesis in the Bible, is simply wrong—it is clearly contradicted by many scientifically established facts in many particular details and in its overall presentation—not the least of which is the fact that it can be shown, scientifically, that the earth is billions of years old, not a few thousand years old, that the earth revolves around the sun, and that many other forms of plant and animal species existed long before human beings first appeared on earth. In opposition to this biblical creation myth, while (again, to my understanding) the Big Bang theory has not been as thoroughly verified by scientific methods as evolution has, it is certainly not the case that the Big Bang theory is, at this point at least, contradicted, in its main features, by scientific understanding and by results arrived at through the scientific method—as, again, is definitely the case with the biblically based myth of creation.

It is of course true that no human being was around at the time of the Big Bang. But this does not invalidate the Big Bang theory or reduce it to “an article of faith” like the biblically based myth of creation. Human beings come to know many things about reality which we do not directly experience or witness. The Big Bang theory has in fact been formulated and developed through a process (which is ongoing) of proceeding from things that have already been clearly established and demonstrated, from many directions, to be true, and “putting these things together” to draw a conclusion about the larger reality that these things are part of. In other words, there is indeed a leap involved here—but, once again, it is not a “leap of faith,” or anything like it, but a leap from evidence to a conclusion about what the evidence shows to be true.

In short, in developing the Big Bang theory, scientists in the fields of astronomy and physics, and other fields, have proceeded from what they do know—what has been scientifically established and tested and verified—about the universe to draw further inferences and conclusions about the universe, including its origins. And at every stage in the development of this scientific theory (as in all scientific theories), these inferences and conclusions have to be, and are, subjected to further testing in reality before they can be raised to the level of a verified theory and gain general acceptance. The Big Bang theory is a work in progress,

but it is not idle speculation: the very questions it poses and explores, the research it stimulates, and the concrete facts it has so far helped to uncover are based on previously accumulated scientific evidence about reality. And this once again marks a profound difference between the scientific method and “religious faith”—since the latter, by definition, does not draw its conclusions, or make its assertions, based on a scientific investigation of and summation of actual reality and cannot, by definition, be tested by scientific methods. In contrast to the biblical creation story of the origin of the universe, the fact is that the Big Bang theory is being continually subjected to further scientific “probing” and analysis. Even though it is true that no human being was present at the time that scientists have calculated that the Big Bang occurred (about 15 billion years ago) the development of new technology—including more powerful telescopes and related instruments, which can be sent into space to record things—has enabled scientists to learn much more about what happened at a time which was shortly after the time when the Big Bang is believed to have occurred, at a point in space far from where our earth now exists. (“Shortly” in this context means something like a billion years, which is not that great a time span in the context of the universe and its development. The reason that scientists are able, in this way, to “see far into the past” in the universe's development has to do with the relation between time and space. Since things that are observed by human beings—directly or with the aid of telescopes and similar instruments—are “transmitted” to us through the medium of light, and at the speed of light, things that occurred long ago but also a long distance from the observer take a long time to reach the observer, even though the speed of light is very fast compared to other everyday movements we are familiar with. For example, if you are in a thunderstorm, you will see a lightning bolt before you hear the thunder connected with it, even though the two actually are part of one phenomenon and actually occurred at the same time. The reason you see the lightning first is that lightning travels at the speed of light, which is much faster than the speed of sound which brings the noise of the thunder.)

What scientists have learned through this “looking back in time,” getting ever closer to the time when the Big Bang is believed to have occurred, has tended to substantiate (to back up and further confirm) the Big Bang theory, even while it has raised new questions relating to all this. But once more the crucial fact here, in relation to what is raised by the writer of this letter—and, more importantly, in relation to fundamental questions concerning what is truth and how human beings arrive at knowledge of the truth, and test that knowledge—is that in no way does this increasing knowledge relating to the origins of the known universe have anything to do with the application of religious principles or “leaps of faith.” In fact, once again this increasing knowledge—arrived at through scientific methods and logical leaps from perceptual to rational

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Continued from page 11
 Knowledge that are consistent with and part of the scientific method—is *in contradiction to*, and *refutes* the biblically based myth of creation, further providing evidence that it is exactly that: a *myth*, invented several thousand years ago, by human beings who lacked knowledge of how the universe (as we know it), the earth, and the living things on the earth (including human beings) *actually* came into being.

Knowing about actual reality—and continually learning more about it—is vitally important for humanity and its future; it is vitally important not only for people in the sciences and the academic world but for the brutally oppressed and exploited people of the earth, who must and can be the backbone and driving force of a revolution to throw off and put an end to all forms of exploitation and oppression, throughout the globe—to be the emancipators not only of themselves but ultimately of all humanity. Confronting reality as it actually is—and as it is changing and developing—and understanding the underlying and driving forces in this, is crucial in order to play a decisive and leading role in bringing about this revolution and ushering in a whole new era in human history, which will shatter and remove forever not only the material chains—the economic, social and political shackles of exploitation and oppression—that enslave people in today's world but also the mental chains, the ways of thinking and the culture, that correspond to and reinforce those material chains. In the "Communist Manifesto," Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, who founded the communist movement over 150 years ago, declared that the communist revolution, and its emancipating principles, methods, and aims, involves a "radical rupture" not

only with the traditional property relations that enslave people, in one form or another, but also a radical rupture with all traditional ideas that reflect and reinforce those traditional property relations.

The struggle in the realm of *epistemology*—the theory of knowledge and how it is acquired by people, the theory of what is true and how people come to know the truth—is a crucial arena in the overall battle for the emancipation of the oppressed and exploited majority of humanity, and ultimately of humanity as a whole. Grasping the defining characteristics and the importance of the scientific method—and, most of all, the most consistent, systematic and comprehensive scientific approach to reality, *the communist world outlook and method*, which can embrace without replacing or suffocating the many

fields of human knowledge and endeavor and can give expression to the richest process of learning about reality and transforming it in the interests of humanity—is of vital importance for this emancipatory struggle. Understanding the profound difference between the attempt to impose "faith-based" notions *on* reality and, in opposition to that, pursuing a scientific understanding *of* reality, including of religion and its origins and effects—understanding the radical difference between "leaps of faith" and the ongoing acquisition of knowledge through continual leaps from perceptual knowledge to rational knowledge—this is a crucial part of carrying forward the struggle to achieve the two radical ruptures that mark the communist revolution as the leap to a whole new, liberating era in human history.

Knowing about actual reality—and continually learning more about it—is vitally important for humanity and its future; it is vitally important not only for people in the sciences and the academic world but for the brutally oppressed and exploited people of the earth, who must and can be the backbone and driving force of a revolution to throw off and put an end to all forms of exploitation and oppression, throughout the globe—to be the emancipators not only of themselves but ultimately of all humanity. Confronting reality as it actually is—and as it is changing and developing—and understanding the underlying and driving forces in this, is crucial in order to play a decisive and leading role in bringing about this revolution and ushering in a whole new era in human history, which will shatter and remove forever not only the material chains—the economic, social and political shackles of exploitation and oppression—that enslave people in today's world but also the mental chains, the ways of thinking and the culture, that correspond to and reinforce those material chains.



From Set the Record Straight: Lies the System Tells You
**You Think Communism Is a Good Idea
 but Doesn't Work?**

Take This Quiz and Think Again

1. During the Mao years of 1949-1976, life expectancy

- A) got worse, declining from 58 years to 52 years.
- B) improved greatly, doubling from 32 to 65 years.
- C) stayed the same at 58 years.
- D) There is no data.

2. In 1949, when China's revolution took place, only about 15 percent of China's population could read and write. When Mao died in 1976, the literacy rate was about:

- A) 80 percent.
- B) 60 percent.
- C) 40 percent.
- D) Mao was anti-intellectual and didn't care if people could read or write.

3. Mass protest occurred throughout the world in the 1960s. What was the only government that *encouraged* criticism and rebellion against people in power carrying out oppressive and elitist policies?

- A) United States
- B) France
- C) China
- D) Australia

4. The infant mortality rate in Shanghai in 1975 was

- A) much worse than New York City's.
- B) the same as New York City's.
- C) better than New York City's.
- D) Communism has no regard for human life and records were not kept.

5. In which of the following countries in the 1950s was the expected social role of women to be mothers who took care of domestic chores and to be subordinate to men? (Hint: there is more than one right answer.)

- A) India
- B) Japan
- C) United States
- D) China

6. Since the overthrow of proletarian rule and the restoration of capitalism in 1976, the percentage of the Chinese population covered by public health programs has

- A) increased from 50 percent to 70 percent.
- B) stayed the same at 50 percent.
- C) There is no longer a public health system in China.
- D) plummeted from 90 percent to 4 percent.

ANSWERS

1. (B) Penny Kane, *The Second Billion* (New York: Penguin, 1987), chapter 5.

2. (A) Ruth Gamberg, *Red and Expert* (New York: Schocken, 1977), p. 41.

3. (C) At the start of the Cultural Revolution, Mao raised the slogan "it is right to rebel against reactionaries" and called on people to "bombard the headquarters" of capitalist roaders who were carrying out elitist and oppressive policies. Providing resources for posters and newspapers, free use of trains for students, and encouragement in the press were some key ways in which mass criticism and struggle were promoted. See "Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" (Adopted on August 8, 1966), in *Important Documents on the Cultural Revolution in China* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970).

4. (C) Ruth and Victor Sidel, *Serve the People: Observations on Medicine in the People's Republic of China* (New York: Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, 1973), pp. 255-256.

5. (A,B,C) In socialist China women were encouraged to and did participate in all levels of the government, educational system, economy, and other aspects of society. And Maoists led the struggle to break further with the legacy from the old society of women's oppression and tradition's chains.

6. (D) Based on government and World Health Organization data, cited in Eva Cheng, "China: Is Capitalist Restoration Inevitable," *Links*, no. 11 (January-April 1999), pp. 62-63. According to the World Health Organization, China now rates last among developing countries in terms of equal access to medical care. See Elizabeth Rosenthal, "Without 'Barefoot Doctors,' China's Rural Families Suffer," *New York Times*, March 14, 2001.

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The rulers constantly bombard us with the message that "communism is dead," that it hasn't worked and cannot work, and that revolutions in power lead to tyranny. One aspect of their ideological crusade is to systematically distort the revolutionary experiences of the Soviet Union and China, especially the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. And the lies and slanders they put out often have the veneer of factuality.

The RCP has initiated a project to **Set the Record Straight**. Its aim is to bring out the truth of these revolutions—their great achievements and victories, along with their mistakes and shortcomings—and to bring forward the works and insights of Bob Avakian in summing up these experiences and pointing to lessons for humanity today. The campaign will focus on colleges and universities. We invite all who are interested to take part.



Red Guards at Tiananmen Square during the Cultural Revolution in China.



During the cultural revolution, a cultural team travel to the countryside to live, work, and perform *The White Haired Girl*.

Lt. Gen. William G. "Jerry" Boykin: Pentagon's Deputy Undersecretary of Defense over the Global Manhunt for Osama bin Laden, Fundamentalist Crusader

Quoted in *L.A. Times*, Oct. 16, 2003:

"George Bush was not elected by a majority of voters in the United States. He was appointed by God."

Quoted in *L.A. Times*, Oct. 16, 2003:

"We in the army of God, in the house of God, kingdom of God have been raised for such a time as this."

On his experience as the commander of the Delta force during the U.S. occupation of Somalia, as quoted in *Washington Post*, Oct. 17, 2003:

"I knew my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God and his was an idol."

Speech to First Baptist Church, Daytona, Florida, January 28, 2003:

"My wife of 25 years...walked in and said, 'I don't love you anymore, you're a religious fanatic, and I'm leaving you.'"

Speaking at First Baptist Church, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, June 2003, as reported by *Newsday*, Oct. 17, 2003:

"The battle that we're in is a spiritual battle. Satan wants to destroy this nation, he wants to destroy us as a nation, and he wants to destroy us as a Christian Army."

Conservative, My Ass...

These People Are Nazis!



Second of a series

Guantánamo and What the U.S. Is Bringing to the World

Even the total, enforced isolation of the prison camp Guantánamo Bay couldn't stop the news from leaking out.

One hundred eighty prisoners in the U.S. interrogation camp have been waging a hunger strike—one news account says that it may have started as early as mid-June.

A Guantánamo detainee, Moheb Ullah Borekzai, released on July 18, told the outside world that the prisoners are refusing food because, "Some of these people say they were mistreated during interrogation. Some say they are innocent. They are protesting that they have been in jail nearly four years and they want to be released."

Meanwhile, the U.S. government is deliberately trying to drown out any concern over torture and mistreatment.

In June Colonel Mike Bumgarner, the commander of

the Joint Detention Group hosted a tour of the prison camp at Guantánamo, where, as readers know, over 500 prisoners from 40 countries are being held in isolation, without charges, under brutal interrogation. This place is a "legal black hole"—because the U.S. government insists that no laws govern their treatment of these prisoners. In many cases, the prisoners are simply men handed over by allied warlords to invading U.S. troops.

Bumgarner told the tour, "I'd gladly invite the world to see our guards in action. I'm very proud of what they do. They treat the detainees humanely...We have to be like parents here. *In loco parentis*. That's how we look at it. It's like a big family."

As the tour was in progress, prisoners shouted intensely to get their messages to the journalists. "They

are liars." The men shouted. "No sleep. No food! No medicine! No doctor!" one man yelled.

Many eyewitness reports (by sources as varied as former prisoners and FBI agents) have documented the brutality of Guantánamo. Prisoners are kept in solitary, often hooded. They are taken, over and over, for interrogations—28,000 interrogations since the punishment camp opened.

According to reports from released prisoners (leaked out from those still in the camp), they have been beaten until their bones and teeth broke, chained in painful positions, injected with disorienting drugs and a drowning-torture called "water boarding" where prisoners are submerged in water until they think they are going to die.

And, in Guantánamo as in Abu Ghraib, the prisoners have been subjected to revolting degrading psychological and physical torture: like smearing them with a substance that appears to be menstrual blood, or forcing them to get naked, on all fours, and bark like dogs, or dressing them in women's lingerie (which the guards know is considered a degradation by devout Moslem men) or desecrating Moslem religious objects with urine or toilet water. And through it all the prisoners are hounded with the idea that they are powerless, hopeless, isolated and forgotten.

According to an exposé in the *New Yorker* magazine, teams of U.S. doctors (called "Bisqueits") have been helping to calibrate and fine-tune the abuse — like the doctors who conducted horrific medical experiments on prisoners in the NAZI concentration camps.

The U.S. military calls these methods "Fear Up" and "Ego Down" and they try to shatter the prisoner into a mental collapse they call "learned helplessness." And, as a result, this prison has seen repeated prisoner suicides, attempted suicides, and mental breakdowns. During one mass incident in 2003 about two dozen prisoners tried to strangle themselves.

If people really want to see what the U.S. is "bringing to the world" (and what the reality of their capitalist "freedom, democracy and rule of law" is all about) all they have to do is look at the horrors the U.S. government has created on the shores of Guantánamo Bay.



Guantánamo, 2002

Heartless On The Border

For months, armed vigilantes with the anti-immigrant Minutemen have been terrorizing immigrants in Arizona and other border states. The Minutemen and other vigilantes have detained hundreds of immigrants, at times at gunpoint, chasing them with dogs, beating them, and even shooting them. The Minutemen leaders often try to come off as "reasonable" in public, but their racism and xenophobic hatred flows freely on their Internet discussion boards.

In early July the U.S. Border Patrol arrested two people in Arizona, accusing them of acting in a "vigilante manner" and hitting them with heavy charges. Was the government stepping in to stop the Minutemen from hunting down and brutalizing people on the border? No!

The two people arrested by the Border Patrol are volunteers from the group No More Deaths who were trying to *save the lives of immigrants!*

Every year, many immigrants die trying to cross the border through the dangerous and remote border deserts. Driven from their homelands because of extreme poverty and oppression, these immigrants risk death in desperate search of a means of livelihood—coming up against the harsh elements, the militarized Border Patrol, and reactionary vigilantes like the Minutemen.

On July 9 two No More Deaths (NMD)

volunteers, college students from Colorado, came across a group of immigrants—including three people suffering from life-threatening dehydration. They had been surviving off of contaminated cattle-tank water and had been vomiting for days. One had severely blistered feet and diarrhea and was unable to walk.

After a phone consultation with medical personnel, it was clear that the three needed immediate medical care. The immigrants agreed to go in the volunteers' car to a Tucson church, where a doctor and a registered nurse were waiting.

But before the group could get there, the NMD volunteers and three immigrants were arrested by the Border Patrol. The NMD volunteers were charged with "transporting illegal immigrants." The Border Patrol refused to provide medical care to the immigrants—claiming later that the immigrants declined an offer of medical attention and said they only needed a cool place to sit down. Two of the immigrants were quickly deported. The third was arrested and is being held as a "material witness"—against the NMD volunteers!

The two 23-year-old volunteers are facing five years in prison and \$250,000 in fines for the "crime" of helping human beings on the verge of death. At their arraignment, the prosecutor argued against their release on bail, saying that they acted in a "vigilante manner" and were a flight risk. The two were released on bail and



The two NMD volunteers who were arrested (seated) speaking at a press conference.

have pleaded not guilty.

At least 167 immigrants have died while trying to cross through the Arizona desert since last year, a record-setting pace. Just in the week before the arrests of the two NMD volunteers, at least 15 immigrants died. The exact number of deaths is not known, since the tremendous heat and scavenging animals can eliminate all traces of bodies within two weeks.

The massive expansion of the Border Patrol in the Tucson sector as well as the vigilante patrols are increasingly forcing immigrants to shift from the already dangerous desert south of Tucson into the even hotter and more remote Yuma area. NMD says they have provided assistance to almost 2,000 immigrants since last year.

Meanwhile, the Minutemen vigilantes are being treated as "heroes" by official voices. For example, Georgia Congressman Phil Gingrey said, "The Minuteman Project is a shining example of how [to] make America a safer, better place to live." California Governor Arnold

Schwarzenegger, shortly after calling for "closing the border," said the Minutemen were doing a "terrific job." When a racist vigilante in Phoenix held seven migrants at gunpoint in April, prosecutors refused to press charges, saying he had made a legitimate "citizen's arrest."

What kind of a system forces immigrants to leave everyone and everything they know, and then forces them to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in increasingly deadly conditions—so they can be exploited in the fields and sweatshops of El Norte?

What kind of a system creates a situation where immigrants who survive the trek across the desert are then hunted down by the official and unofficial enforcers?

What kind of system makes hunters of humans into heroes, while criminalizing those dedicated to saving people from agonizing death? An outdated, criminal system. A cold, heartless system of capitalism.

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This provocative collection of reflections and observations by Bob Avakian on art, culture, science and philosophy offers a rare treat. Excerpted from talks as well as more informal discussions and conversations, many of the texts in this collection allow the reader to experience firsthand the freewheeling Bob Avakian as he continues to develop his extensive body of work, with its radical new directions, with regard to the communist project.

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