

Initial Response To Workers Dreadnought On Bob Avakian's "New Synthesis".

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By [Surendra Ajit Rupasinghe](#) -



Ajit Rupasinghe

Recently, Colombo Telegraph carried a five-part critique of the "New Synthesis" developed by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party-USA (RCP-USA) posted by the Workers Dreadnought (WD). It carried a reference to my comments in its first posting, where I had upheld the new synthesis. This is an initial response.

The essence of the critique by WD consists of three main points: 1. That there is nothing new in the new synthesis, in that Avakian has merely repeated what had been stated before without acknowledging his sources, 2. That Avakian had not referred to any of the new developments and arguments developed by others on the topics covered by him, and 3. That Avakian has served to obfuscate and derail some of the major philosophical and theoretical principles already established as given truths.

On the contrary, Avakian has reasserted and deepened the scientific understanding of the basic principles of MLM through a radical, comprehensive and intensive critical summation of the historical experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat (DOP) and the science of MLM, taking into account serious errors, limitations and deviations and learning lessons, while upholding the genuine path-breaking achievements, and taking into account the new dynamics and developments within the system of world imperialism and sharpening and reformulating revolutionary theory and strategy and thereby synthesizing this experience and the science of MLM on a whole new level. Bob Avakian has unfolded a path towards a new synthesis that needs to be further deepened and developed through revolutionary practice and engaging in struggle and debate.

Summing up experience, radically and critically breaking with obsolete assumptions, practices and methods and synthesizing new knowledge on a whole new basis is the critical essence of MLM. Lenin broke with the assumption held by Marx that Proletarian Revolution and Socialism

could only be accomplished first in the advanced capitalist countries. He broke with the assumption that once the economic base had been socialized and collectivized, the superstructure would mechanically follow, although he could not develop this theory fully. Mao also broke with the theory that Proletarian Revolution and Socialism could only be accomplished first in the advanced Capitalist Countries, and went on to give leadership to the Chinese Communist Party in waging the New Democratic Revolution and the Socialist Revolution in a semi-feudal/semi-colonial and colonial country. He also broke with the view that changes in the superstructure would mechanically follow revolutionizing the economic base. What was revealed that it was not sufficient to nationalize and collectivize private property, since it took new forms under the DOP, where people in positions of power would use that power to privately appropriate wealth, status and privilege and establish new social relations of exploitation, and that these persons formed a new class of Capitalists with its headquarters inside the Communist Party itself-at its highest levels of authority. Indeed, he refuted this theory by proving in theory and practice that class struggle would not only continue under the DOP, but would even become more complex and intense. Both Lenin and Mao rejected the 'theory of the Productive Forces' and showed that revolutions could and did occur in the weakest links of the chain of Imperialism, provided that the subjective forces were prepared to take advantage of such historic conjunctures, and demonstrated how such ruptures would serve to weaken imperialism and further the cause of revolution in the advanced Capitalist-Imperialist countries. Whether in the advanced countries or in the backward colonies, the line was to establish liberated base areas of the world revolution. These epochal breakthroughs would not have been possible unless the science of revolution had not been applied creatively, discarding what had become obsolete and applying what has become truth in the light of reality.

Marxism itself had been forged through a series of *epistemological ruptures* with the whole legacy of the anthropological humanism and spiritualized materialism of Feuerbach and the idealist metaphysics of Hegel. Epistemological ruptures refer to the intellectual process where an object is stripped of its ideological layers and reconstituted as an object of scientific inquiry through a new theoretical formulation. Marx did this for the object of History and for the philosophical method of materialist dialectics, which he then applied to the fields of Scientific Philosophy, Political Economy and Scientific Socialism. This Marxist scientific tradition was carried out by Lenin and Mao. To deny the need for such epistemological ruptures is to deny the status of MLM as a science and to reduce it to a religion. (Now, I should have noted that I learned this from reading Althusser, lest I be accused of borrowing ideas and knowledge without referring to sources)

No one could possibly argue that following the fall of China, there was no need for the deepest critical summation possible of the whole historical experience of the DOP, the ICM and MLM itself, and on this basis to reconstitute the science of MLM on a whole new basis. The fall of China seemed inexplicable. How could it happen? After all, the GPCR was waged on the basis of summing up the experience of Capitalist Restoration in the USSR and intended to prevent such restoration by advancing the revolution under the DOP. The GPCR represented the highest pinnacle of scientific understanding of the laws of the class struggle and Scientific Socialism. How then, could capitalist restoration take place? What then is the future of Communism?

The fall of China brought out an array of negative tendencies that had to be combated and overcome through the most rigorous reassertion and creative application of the MLM. This is beside the concerted onslaught directed by Imperialism and Reaction as to the death of Communism, which also had to be refuted in both theory and practice. One negative tendency was defeatism and capitulation, caving into the imperialist onslaught that Communism is not possible, that it was a terrible Utopia. The other was to give play to voluntarism and “Left” adventurism, denying the possibility of the science of revolution and the role of revolutionary theory. Guevarism and all forms of putchism and insurrectionism replaced scientific revolution- as it did in Sri Lanka at the cost of two generations of revolutionaries. Yet another tendency was to lie in the slumber of a teleological destiny as to the inevitability of Communism- something destined by Nature and History. This view was also joined by an apocalyptic vision of the general crisis of imperialism leading to its inevitable downfall, or that world war 3 had to take place for there to be a leap in the world revolution. These were- and are- real tendencies that eroded the science of revolution and the cause of Communism from within.

Genuine Communist revolutionaries had genuine and agonizing questions. Why had not Mao taken steps to found a new International? Why did he remain silent when Chinese foreign policy went to the extent of extolling the virtues of the Shah of Iran. Why did he remain silent when Chou-En-Lai congratulated Madame Sirimavo Bandaranaike for having decimated the youth uprising of 1971 and even offered economic and financial assistance to prop up her regime? Why had not Mao refuted the “Three Worlds Theory and Line” openly and publicly, instead of leaving us to grope in the dark and providing various revisionist and opportunist forces to advance, as they did in Sri Lanka- funded by the Chinese Embassy? The question is all the more vexed and agonizing given that Mao had supported the “Spring Thunder of Naxalbari, supported the cause of the National Liberation struggle of Palestine and supported the Afro-American struggle for national liberation, even while entertaining Nixon. Mao was an outstanding proletarian internationalist, yet he made these serious errors or went along with them. It is in such a decisive subjective conjuncture in the ICM- in the context of the concerted and sustained assault on Communism by world Imperialism and Reaction, in the context of all kinds of opportunist and revisionist tendencies sprouting within the ranks of the revolution, when burning questions agonized genuine revolutionaries, when the future of Communism was at stake, that Bob Avakian rose to the task of excavating, reasserting and synthesizing the science of MLM to a whole new level by critically summing up the historical experience of the DOP from the Paris Commune, the October Revolution and the construction of Socialism in the Soviet Union to the GPCR, and MLM itself, taking into account the new dynamics and developments in the system of world imperialism and drawing the necessary theoretical and strategic implications for advancing the world revolution, by re-envisioning Communism and the cause of emancipating humankind on a whole new, vibrant and enlightened basis.

“Conquer the World” by Bob Avakian was truly world conquering in its analytical precision, philosophical depth, scope of vision, theoretical rigor and lucidity, historical impact and practical significance. It was like spring rain following a ‘winter of discontent’. The “Immortal Contributions of Mao Tse Tung” came to the defense of MLM like an inexhaustible multi-barrel rocket launcher. No one had summed up experience, drawn lessons and raised the science of revolution to new heights as had Avakian through his contributions at the most decisive hour for our generation. His analyses and evaluations of the work of other scientists and artists, even of

comedians and sports personalities, of art, literature and religion, his exposure of every line and agenda put out by the ruling class in the US, the analysis of the power structure, the drawing up of the philosophical basis of proletarian internationalism, the line and strategy on the National Question and the United Front, relying on the ‘real’ proletariat, his call for unleashing individual creativity and initiative under the DOP, his grappling with the concept of ‘ a solid core with elasticity- all to enrich the science of MLM, proletarian revolution and Communism in the most living and vibrant way – and this is hardly an inclusive array of his contributions. Furthermore, his leadership had provided the basis for the flowering of an incredible array of creative contributions, such as by Andrea Skybreak (Evolution) Raymond Lotta (America in Decline, China and Mao). Under his leadership, the RCP-USA newspaper, Revolution has reached the far reaches of trenches of combat in the US and across the world.

Bob Avakian had led the Revolutionary Union (RU), the precursor to the RCP-USA, through major two-line struggles against various opportunist and revisionist trends within the RU and the Revolutionary movement in the US, published as the “Red Papers”. To my knowledge, the RCP was formed on the basis of the revolutionary communist principles established by the RU and the line and principles forged in the defense of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM) following the capitalist restoration in China. In this sense, the RCP-USA was forged in a decisive protracted two-line struggle against revisionist and opportunist lines and tendencies in confronting the major issues dealing with the world revolution, the US revolution as a subordinate component, and the goal and vision of Communism. This two-line struggle was an indispensable part of the theoretical-ideological and practical-organizational struggle to forge the RCP-USA on the scientific principles of MLM.

The Workers Dreadnought author accuses Avakian for not having produced anything like Bettleheims volumes on the Class Struggles in the USSR. This is pure academic and sectarian nonsense. The RCP-USA has publicized the work of the “Gang of Four” on the major issues and class struggles (including the two volume work on political economy) during the GPCR as no other party. It has publicized the historic and epochal achievements of the Chinese Revolution, of Mao and Chiang Ching and other heroic leaders as no other party. The WD author claims that Avakian is infected by nationalism, in spite of his avowed internationalism. This is really ridiculous, given his contributions towards raising internationalism not simply as an extension of a duty, but as the essence of the ideology and politics of the communist revolution and the mission of emancipating humankind. His refutation of the revisionist lines put out by both Comrade Venue and by the Communist Party of Nepal, and the contributions in forming the RIM, are hallmarks of internationalism.

The WD author has not produced anything new by his critique. He simply carries out a grudge against Avakian, it seems. His futile attempt to downgrade the contributions of Avakian reveals an inability and unwillingness to apply MLM to critically engage with the new synthesis and to develop it. More fundamentally, he refers to the failure of the GPCR in preventing the Capitalist Restoration and questions the whole analysis of the coup led by Deng Tsiao Peng and his gang to seize power. Well, he should provide us with a better analysis. To claim that the GPCR failed is serious. The GPCR was an epochal breakthrough in the theory and practice of the DOP representing the highest pinnacle of mass conscious revolution yet aimed at preventing Capitalist Restoration, beating back the counter revolution, defending and advancing the revolution,

combating revisionism and revolutionizing all of society and seeding the birth of the new Communist human being. The GPCR succeeded in preventing capitalist restoration for over a decade. It proved that Socialism had to defend against both internal and external (Imperialist) class enemies, who were in league together. It demonstrated that the proletariat and its vanguard Communist Party had the duty and the possibility to wage all-round revolutionary class struggle even in a single country, but that there would be objective and subjective limits to this possibility, and that the final victory of Communism is only possible on a world scale, where successful revolutions in the advanced imperialist-Capitalist countries would change the balance of power in favor of Socialism. To deny all these path-breaking and truly emancipating historic achievements by claiming that the GPCR was a failure is to dabble in idealist metaphysics based on a linear and mechanical view of the dynamics of the world revolution and the path to Communism.

To deny the need for an epistemological rupture with a whole legacy of errors, limitations and deviations precisely in order to defend, apply and advance the genuine scientific essence and the real historic achievements of our class so far is to deny the science of MLM itself. It is to treat MLM as a dead dogma. Everything that needs to be said has already been said, everything that needs to be re-discovered and discovered anew is already on the table. Everything that needs to be reworked and re-thought has already been done. This is to turn Communism into a new religion and MLM into a Bible. Everything new comes through after waging bitter and unrelenting struggle with the old. Even in our own party, there were comrades that stubbornly rejected the new synthesis. How dare you criticize Stalin or Mao? Even Marx and Lenin? How dare you question the validity of the United Front Against Fascism. How arrogant it is to think that anyone can do better or advance beyond these immortals? And so on. The question is not whether anyone can go beyond the immortals. The question is that their immortality lies in their being human and their life and existence being driven by contradictions and conflicts, and yes necessary limitations that future generations must overcome precisely by honoring their immortality. It is time we applied materialist dialectics to MLM and advance both MLM and the scientific philosophy and method of materialist dialectics itself to ever ascending new heights and summits of experience and knowledge.

The disintegration of the RIM was due to the prevalence of revisionist and opportunist trends within it. There were theories and lines bordering on Lin Piaoism that viewed the Third World as the arena of protracted people's war (storm centers of the world revolution) that would finally encircle and overcome the citadels of world imperialism. A linear and mechanical view that denied the possibility of revolution in the advanced Imperialist/capitalist countries. Then there was the wholesale capitulation by the then Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which turned against the RIM. Then there was the renegade, Mike Ely, who was ousted from the party who did his work to undermine the leadership of Avakian and the RIM. No doubt, there were tendencies towards over-centralisation and forms of elitism that eroded the RIM from within. Bob Avakian and the RCP-USA played a vanguard role in bringing about the unity of the Maoist forces following the fall of China and in forming and sustaining the RIM. It is simply unfair and untrue to blame the new synthesis for the collapse of the RIM. Rather than gloat about this negative development, we should seriously analyse the causes that led to the disintegration with the aim and dedication to build it on new foundations and principles.

It is not that we do not have differences with some of Avakians conceptions. For example, we do not believe that Communism is the end of *antagonistic* contradiction. Irreconcilable antagonism and violent struggle will prevail eternally and absolutely. One will split into two and it will not always be polite. But, the economic basis for such contradiction and class struggle may have given place to a whole new basis in the struggle for survival. However, these are secondary differences that should be struggled over and never constitute barricades in forming internationalist unity. In fact, we think that the whole series of questions that Avakian raises in terms of what Communism society would look like in the context of a truly globalized world without borders and states, where the real diversity of cultures would flourish freely and provide individual freedom to engage in Hip-Hop and whatever, where there would be abundance, yet unevenness, and where there would still be the need for some degree and form of centralization—that is to really engage in a living and liberating dream of freedom.

We feel strongly that the criticisms raised by WD are not a sufficient basis, whether we agree or not, to abandon our responsibility to initiate the process of building a new Maoist International Center. The WD author has not provided any evidence that the differences he had identified are fundamental to forging international unity. To place these differences over and above the need and responsibility to build a new Maoist International is to capitulate to imperialism and reaction. Let us engage in spirited debate and principled struggle over these issues even as we forge unity to build a new Maoist International Center.

This is by no means an exhaustive evaluation of the contributions by Comrade Avakian. I am sure I have not even approached ingesting the whole of the new synthesis. But, I felt compelled to respond to the rather slick and facile critique offered by the WD author, who has contributed nothing new, except carry out a diatribe, and certainly by the seriousness of the question itself.

* [Surenra Ajit Rupasinghe](#) - Secretary ,Ceylon Communist Party (Maoist)

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