A QUESTION SHARPLY POSED
by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

NAT TURNER OR THOMAS JEFFERSON?

Slave rebellion or slavemaster? Do you support the oppressed rising up against the oppressive system and seeking a radically different way, even with certain errors and excesses—or do you support the oppressors, and the leaders and guardians of an outmoded oppressive order, who may talk about “inalienable rights” but bring down wanton brutality and very real terror, on masses of people, to enforce and perpetuate their system of oppression?

This speaks to a basic question of stand and orientation, and represents a fundamental dividing line. And, along with “setting the record straight” on the actual experience and role of communist revolution, and refuting the factual lies spread in the media, mass-market books, and the like, the struggle against the oppressive system and seeking the liberation of humanity as a whole, from all forms and relations of oppression and exploitation, domination and degradation, everywhere in the world.

Do we need to learn from not only the overwhelmingly positive experience of the communist movement so far, but also its shortcomings, including sometimes serious errors and even excesses? Yes, this is an important part of the new synthesis of communism, and it is crucial in order to be able to do even better in the new stage of communist revolution. But this can only be done, in the fullest way, by taking up and applying the scientific communist method and approach that leads, first of all, to standing firmly and consistently on the right side of this fundamental dividing line, between oppressors and oppressed—and, beyond that, making it possible to correctly assess and learn from the rich experience of the struggle against oppression, throughout history and in all parts of the world, including the shortcomings involved in this experience, in order to carry forward the fight to the final goal of communism and the emancipation of the oppressed, and ultimately humanity as a whole, from all forms and relations of oppression and exploitation, domination and degradation, everywhere in the world.

The Nat Turner Slave Rebellion
Nat Turner was the leader of a slave rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia, one of at least 250 slave revolts that took place in the U.S. during the Civil War. Armed with just a few knives, hatchets and axes at the start, their plan was to strike hard and quickly against the slave owners and march toward the county seat, killing other slaves who opposed them. However, as the Nat Turner’s force grew to as many as 80, the uprising slowly took the slave system, and there was a huge, brutal repression from those in power. The rebellion was defeated after 48 hours—Turner himself went into hiding for two months before surrendering, and 55 slaves were executed by the state. As many as 200 other slaves were killed by the slave owners’ militias and vigilantes, and many were torched. During the reaction, Turner’s forces killed all the slave owners they encountered—not only the adults but also their children. But the Nat Turner Rebellion—and other slave rebellions—must be firmly upheld because, as its principal character and in essence, it was a just struggle of the oppressed rising up against their oppression.

Slave rebellion or slavemaster? Do you support the oppressed rising up against the oppressive system and seeking a radically different, emancipating system and way of life?

Do we need to learn from not only the overwhelmingly positive experience of the communist movement so far, but also its shortcomings, including sometimes serious errors and even excesses? Yes, this is an important part of the new synthesis of communism, and it is crucial in order to be able to do even better in the new stage of communist revolution. But this can only be done, in the fullest way, by taking up and applying the scientific communist method and approach that leads, first of all, to standing firmly and consistently on the right side of this fundamental dividing line, between oppressors and oppressed—and, beyond that, making it possible to correctly assess and learn from the rich experience of the struggle against oppression, throughout history and in all parts of the world, including the shortcomings involved in this experience, in order to carry forward the fight to the final goal of communism and the emancipation of the oppressed, and ultimately humanity as a whole, from all forms and relations of oppression and exploitation, domination and degradation, everywhere in the world.