

Bob Avakian Responds to Mark Rudd on the Lessons of the 1960s and the Need for An Actual Revolution

Infantile Expressions of Outrage, or Accommodation to This Monstrous System, Are Not the Only Alternatives

In the *New York Times* recently (Friday, March 6, 2020) a commentary appears (“Political Passion Turned Violent”) authored by Mark Rudd, a former 1960s radical. The motivation of the *Times* editors, in publishing this piece by Rudd, is not difficult to discern. Rudd emphasizes that significant acts of violence today, and the danger this poses to society, is being perpetrated by what he terms the “far right”; and, more generally, he insists that nonviolence is the only legitimate and effective way to bring about desired (and desirable) social change and that all violence, on the part of any social movement for change, must be renounced. Aside from Rudd’s own motivation in writing this commentary, the fact is that both of these arguments by Rudd are in line with the concerns and objectives of the editors of the *Times*—and of the section of the ruling class of this system of which they are representatives: They recognize the very real threat to the “norms” of the existing social order in what is being done by Trump and those who are aligned with and rallying behind him (the “far right,” in Rudd’s terms); and, more fundamentally, they are concerned that, especially in these times of intensifying polarization and acute “social stress,” social movements and societal conflicts must remain confined within a framework and limits that will not threaten the existing system. And it is no doubt an added benefit for them to have these arguments made by someone identified as a “1960s radical” who has “come in from the cold” and rejoined the ranks of the “reasonable” who insist there is really no alternative to this system.

Because of this—because Rudd claims, as someone who was involved in the radical upsurge of the 1960s, to be offering crucial lessons and universal principles about how the fight against oppression and injustice must (and must not) be waged—it is important to examine what Rudd argues, and in particular what he renounces that *should* be renounced, and what should *not* be renounced but upheld

and carried forward, while being given a scientifically founded orientation and direction.

In the late 1960s (and into the early 1970s) Rudd was part of the Weather Underground. As he himself refers to, the people who formed the Weather Underground had been part of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which by the late 1960s, at the height of the radical upsurge of that time, had become a mass organization of thousands who represented the broadly held revolutionary sentiments of literally millions of youth at that point. As it came to the understanding that things such as the oppression of Black people and the mass slaughter carried out by the U.S. in Vietnam were somehow tied into the very nature of the system itself, SDS had run up against the question of how to bring about some kind of revolutionary change, although there were different ideas about what that actually meant and how to make it happen, and this resulted in the organization splitting into a number of different trends, each committed to a different approach in regard to these very basic questions. The Weather Underground in effect gave expression to the outrage of frustrated educated youth who had lost patience with the idea of carrying out political work to win masses of people to a revolutionary position and instead adopted what amounted to acts of “excitative terror” to substitute for a mass revolutionary movement. In one of his more truthful and insightful observations, Rudd has made the point that the enormity of the crimes being committed by this system, at home and in Vietnam, was more than those who became the Weather Underground could rationally deal with. And so they adopted an orientation and actions that were divorced from any serious, scientific approach to revolution, and in many ways increasingly divorced from reality. As someone who was part of the broad revolutionary movement of that time, who encountered and struggled against this political and ideological degeneration of people righteously outraged at the

crimes of this system, and reflecting back on it now, a paraphrase of the opening lines of the powerful Allen Ginsberg poem *Howl* comes to mind: I saw some of the best people of my generation destroyed (for a time) by madness.

Unfortunately, the “recovery” of someone like Rudd from that madness has involved falling into another kind of political and ideological “insanity”: the notion that the massive crimes of this system can somehow be addressed through a movement for reform, leaving this system intact and in power. What should be renounced from the position of the former Weather Underground is its abandonment of and departure from the process of bringing forward a movement of millions of people aiming for an actual revolutionary overthrow of this criminal system. What should *not* be renounced is the profound hatred for this whole system and the determination to put an end to its endless crimes, which in reality requires an actual revolution carried out by masses, millions of people.

A System of Massive Organized Violence

While Rudd refers to Black revolutionaries who were “ruthlessly targeted by the police and the federal government” during the 1960s upsurge, he has seemingly “forgotten” the profound truth spoken by one of the leading Black revolutionaries of that time, Rap Brown: “Violence is as American as cherry pie.”

Under this system, the police kill a thousand people every year and subject millions more, especially people of color, to continual harassment and brutality. Millions of Black and Latino men, and growing numbers of women, are incarcerated in hell-hole prisons, while millions more are ensnared in the “criminal justice system” in various ways. At the same time, the U.S. continues to carry out mass slaughter (and to support such slaughter by its “allies”) in the Middle East and many other parts of the world.

Rudd recognizes some of this, but then distorts history and once more departs from a rational, logical line of thinking in the service of renouncing and ruling out of order anything other than nonviolent protest within the bounds of this system. And, as should surprise no one who has been paying attention to the conventions of the times, as part of this Rudd bends his metaphorical knee, paying the seemingly obligatory obeisance, to the distortions of “identity politics.” He reminds the readers that the people who made up the Weather Underground were “white, middle-class, college-educated kids.” And then comes this:

All of us were overcome both by grief over this country’s violence and by shame at not being able to stop the war. *That shame also emanated from our class and racial privilege. We weren’t the ones being carpet-bombed in Vietnam or confronting racist mobs and sheriffs in Mississippi.* (emphasis added)

One is tempted to dismiss this whole line of argument (and especially the part I have italicized above) with a simple “**So What?!**” But it deserves to be dug into more deeply. First of all, Rudd (who refers to Black revolutionaries being subjected to vicious repression by the police and the government) once again “forgets” those Black revolutionaries and the fact that, in moving from the limitations of the civil rights movement to the more advanced position of demanding Black liberation and linking this with liberation struggles in the Third World, those Black revolutionaries exerted a powerful positive force in influencing the movements of those times, including among educated youth, toward a more revolutionary orientation, even as that orientation was (in the parlance of those times) a “mixed bag,” involving a complex of conflicting tendencies, including the revolutionary communism that was coming from China as well as various revolutionary nationalist and other contradictory trends. Rudd’s arguments here are also in line with those raised at the time by ruling class and right-wing advocates of the Vietnam war, who attacked the students who mobilized against that war by denouncing them as privileged middle class brats who had managed to avoid “serving” in that war. This ignores the fact that among the most oppressed sections of society, those with the least “class and racial privilege”—Black people, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans, whose youth died disproportionately in that war—opposition to the war was very widespread, and the fact that there was growing opposition to the war among the U.S. soldiers (and veterans) of the war, inspired to a significant degree by the anti-war stand and actions of precisely the student movement. Among other things, this reality itself is a powerful refutation of what Rudd seems to be arguing or implying. The “class and racial privilege” that Rudd raises, with regard to those who made up the Weather Underground, and the fact that they were not the ones being subjected to the horrific violence to which he refers, in no way renders their shame at all this invalid, illegitimate, or inconsequential. On the contrary, the fact that they were not being directly subjected to this but *were outraged by it, and determined to do something to stop it*, is exactly *what was right* about their orientation. The problem was that they abandoned and rejected the road of building a *mass revolutionary movement* deter-

mined to put an end not only to the slaughter in Vietnam and the violent oppression and repression “at home,” but to the whole system which, out of its very nature, continually perpetrates such monstrous crimes. Instead, they made what actually constituted a retreat into isolated acts of misdirected violence, and into an overall orientation, objectively in opposition to the building of the necessary revolutionary mass movement.

Reflecting back on the death of members of the Weather Underground, who were killed while building a bomb that, according to Rudd, was intended to be detonated at a dance at the Fort Dix military base (a dance which was attended not only by soldiers but by civilians as well), Rudd is correct that such a bombing, had it been carried out, would have resulted in even more widespread and vicious government repression, not just against the Weather Underground but against the broad mass movements of resistance and genuine revolutionary forces at that time. But he is playing with the truth when he portrays U.S. soldiers, like those then stationed at Fort Dix, as simply “our neighbors and fellow citizens.” No, they were something else—something more and something worse: they were part of the massive machinery of death and destruction that was carrying out the mass slaughter of the Vietnamese people, in their millions, in the service of the imperial interests and aims that the military of this system serves and seeks to enforce. In fact, as alluded to above, this was something that growing numbers of those soldiers themselves were coming to realize, and by the time Rudd is speaking of (early 1970) thousands of them had taken to open rebellion against the crimes they were being ordered to carry out and against those, in the military and beyond, who were organizing, training, deploying and ordering them to carry out these massive war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Certainly, the bombing of the dance at Fort Dix would have been a wrong and very harmful act. But the soldiers of the U.S. military, then and now, do not deserve to be simply embraced as “our neighbors and fellow citizens,” nor still less celebrated as “heroes,” but rather to be condemned for the crimes they have carried out and called upon and struggled with to refuse to continue committing such crimes and to become part of the political resistance to the system that requires and demands such massive atrocity on an ongoing basis—a struggle which, in fact, was carried out by many revolutionary-minded people during the course of the Vietnam war, contributing to the growing opposition among the soldiers themselves and to the broader movement of opposition to that war.¹

As part of his repudiation of revolution, Rudd asserts that, in the time since the 1960s upsurge, “the left” has “developed a strong consensus...to control its violent fringe” but that “Violence is once again threatening our social fabric, this time from the far right.”

First of all, and fundamentally, it is not just “the far right” but *the whole system—and those who rule in it, including those on the “left” of this system (in the Democratic Party)—that perpetrate violence.* Is the Democratic Party what Rudd means by the “violent fringe” of “the left”?! Has the Democratic Party, and those who seek to be its top leaders—have *they* renounced violence? *NO*, they have not—and *they cannot.* **Their system continually perpetrates and depends on violence—it could not exist and perpetuate itself without massive violence.**

Reform vs. Revolution

Rudd poses a false dichotomy: As he portrays things, it’s either violence by a small group isolated from masses of people, or limiting things to reforms that are achieved through the nonviolent action of millions of people. But what about the *truly revolutionary* struggle of *millions of people*, aiming not just to win concessions from the existing system, but to actually overthrow it and bring a much better system into being? There is, of course, a definite place, and a definitely positive role, for massive nonviolent struggles whose aim is short of revolution but which oppose real oppression and atrocities of this system. A very important example of this is the call by Refuse Fascism for nonviolent but sustained mass mobilization to drive out the fascist Trump/Pence regime. But *limiting* things to nonviolence, in all circumstances and as some kind of supposed absolute principle—opposing a revolutionary struggle carried out by millions of people to overthrow this system when the conditions that make that possible have been brought into being—means at least objectively accepting and accommodating to this monstrous system and the very violent institutions (in particular the armed forces and police) that enforce its rule, here and throughout the world, with the most massive and heinous atrocity. Whatever his intention, this is what Rudd is actually doing.

As I have emphasized:

Certain government concessions to the fight against injustice—for example, civil rights legislation; DACA, which granted temporary legal status to some immigrants brought here as children; court decisions

establishing the right to abortion and gay marriage—were hard-fought victories, but the problem is that they are, and can only be, *partial* victories, dealing with only some aspects of oppression under this system, but not eliminating the oppression as a whole, or the *source* of this oppression—which is the system itself. And even where such partial victories *are* won, so long as this system remains in power, there will be powerful forces who will move to attack and undermine, and seek to reverse, even these partial gains.²

Rudd has not only reversed himself on what was essentially right (and righteous) in his stand during the 1960s—his hatred for and opposition to this system itself—as well as what was very wrong in where that hatred led him (embracing, if not himself actually carrying out, infantile acts of violence divorced from the revolutionary struggle of masses of people). He has even gone so far as to trivialize what is represented by “the far right.” Speaking of its inclination to violence, he says this:

Oddly, I get it: Take away the white supremacy and leave the pain, and it's not that different from my friends and me 50 years ago.

Yes, it is definitely different—there is a profound difference! Without ignoring the very real problems with the orientation and actions of the Weather Underground, there is no similarity, and definitely no equivalence, between the righteous but misguided hatred for the criminal nature and atrocities of this system, which drove the Weather Underground to a kind of madness, and, on the other hand, the violent fanaticism of fascists who are determined to fortify and carry to extreme dimensions every form of vicious oppression and depraved atrocity that is required by this system. Rudd's comments here fall in with the trend of lending a certain “legitimacy” to what is not just a “far right,” in some vague sense, but a definite *fascist* force, involving a powerful section of the ruling class, embodied in the Republican Party, and in particular now the Trump/Pence regime, and a significant segment of society which is the hard core “base” of that Party.

White supremacy is not something that is incidental to, but is at the heart of, this fascism—and it cannot simply be discounted (“taken away”) but must be fully recognized for what it is and forcefully struggled against.

Rudd's expressions of empathy for these fascists include the statement that they “have grievances about the slipping away of what they have always seen as ‘their country.’” But what, really, *are* those grievances and what is it that

they have always seen as “their country” which they want to “make great again”?

As I have pointed out:

There is a direct line from the Confederacy to the fascists of today, and a direct connection between their white supremacy, their open disgust and hatred for LGBT people as well as women, their willful rejection of science and the scientific method, their raw “America First” jingoism and trumpeting of “the superiority of western civilization” and their bellicose wielding of military power, including their expressed willingness and blatant threats to use nuclear weapons, to destroy countries.³

And here it is worth citing important insights from the African-American theologian Hubert Locke, who points particularly to the Christian fundamentalists, who are a driving force in this fascism:

We should make no mistake about what is at stake in this battle with the religious right. It is not happenstance that it is a movement that draws its strength and finds its support principally in the so-called heartland of the nation and especially in its southern precincts. This is the portion of the United States that has never been comfortable with post-WWII America. The brief period of normalcy after the war was followed within a decade by a pent-up and long overdue racial revolution that overturned centuries of culture and tradition, especially in the South. The disillusionment, two decades later, with an unpopular war in southeast Asia shook the foundations of traditional/conventional patriotism in American life; it was followed in the next decade by a sexual revolution that upset deeply entrenched views among this portion of the American populace about the subordinate place of women in society and the non-place of gay and lesbian persons in American life. These political and social and cultural defeats have now erupted into a pitched battle to turn back the clock on the last half-century and return America to its pre-war purity. It is not without significance that teaching creationism in the schools, for example, is such a prominent part of the religious right agenda. That was a battle the right lost in the mid-1920s but it is not one that the right ever acknowledged losing—just as some diehards have never acknowledged losing the Civil War. Consequently, the restoration the religious right seeks is one that would recapture a way of life that disappeared in this nation a half-century ago.

Were all this only a battle for the hearts and minds of the American people, we could wade into the conflict with a great deal less concern, confident that good sense and human decency would ultimately triumph over ignorance and bigotry. But this is a battle for power—it's about seizing the reins of government, manipulating the courts and judicial decisions, controlling the media, and making incursions into every possible corner of our private lives and relationships, so that what the religious right perceives as the will of God will reign in America.⁴

Rudd even goes so far as to declare that everyone in this country is “in this together.” Apparently, it is not enough for Rudd that he has “made his peace” with this violently oppressive system; he goes so far as insist that common cause must be found with those—fascists—who want to give *the most extreme and grotesque expressions* to the crimes that are *built into* this system.

The Basis and the Forces for Revolution

Speaking to the orientation of himself and the others in the Weather Underground in the late 1960s/early 1970s, Rudd characterizes their outlook as one of “clinging to the delusion that violent revolution was imminent.” Among other things, here Rudd is continuing with his portrayal of false dichotomies: He is “negating” the false assumption of the Weather Underground at that time that a revolution could be set off by a small group engaging in acts of violence divorced from, and objectively posed in opposition to, the struggle of masses of people, by now putting forward the false, and certainly no less harmful, declaration that an actual revolution is neither possible nor really desirable. In reality, the question of whether an actual revolution might have been possible in this country at the height of the mass upsurge of the late 1960s/early 1970s, is a serious and complex matter, and not something that should be treated in the irresponsible way that Rudd does, with this dismissal of this question with the facile and fatuous phrase “the delusion that violent revolution was imminent.”

An actual revolution requires two essential factors: a revolutionary situation, and a revolutionary people in their millions. And these two factors are closely interconnected. A revolutionary situation involves not just a crisis in society in some general sense but a situation where the system and its ruling powers are in a profound and acute crisis and millions and millions of people refuse to be ruled in the old way—and are willing and determined to put everything

on the line to bring down this system and bring into being a new society and government. Key components and signs of a revolutionary crisis are that the violence used to enforce this system is seen by large parts of society for what it is—murderous and illegitimate—and that the conflicts among the ruling forces become really deep and sharp, and masses of people respond to this *not* by falling in behind one side or the other of the oppressive rulers, but by taking advantage of this situation to build up the forces for revolution.⁵

At the high point of the radical upsurge of the 1960s/early 1970s, there were definite elements of the necessary factors for revolution: there was a very real and deepening political crisis for the ruling class, and there were masses of revolutionary-minded people. This is an undeniable truth:

By 1968 and for several years after, there were large numbers of people in this country, including millions of youth from the middle class as well as masses of poor and oppressed people, who were motivated by a thoroughly justified hatred of this system and aspirations for a radically different and better world—and this reached deeply into the system's own armed forces—even if the understanding of most was marked by revolutionary sentiment which, while righteous, was lacking in any deep and consistent scientific basis.⁶

But the situation had not yet developed (and, as things unfolded, it did not develop) into an all-out revolutionary crisis; and the revolutionary forces at that time were not clear on and not united around a strategic approach that could have cohered the widespread revolutionary sentiment into an organized force capable of waging a real revolutionary fight to defeat and dismantle the violent forces of repression of the ruling capitalist-imperialist system. As I have summed up:

the real failure of that time was that there was not yet a revolutionary vanguard with that scientific foundation and method, and the orientation, strategy, and program that could give organized expression to the mass revolutionary sentiment and lead a real attempt at actually making revolution.⁷

The radical upsurge of the 1960s in this country was in turn part of a broader wave of struggle and transformation that was taking place throughout the world, and was driven and inspired to a large degree by the struggles, throughout the Third World of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, to throw off the yoke of colonial oppres-

sion—and beyond that the existence of a revolutionary socialist state in China and the mass revolutionary movement of the Cultural Revolution in that country, involving hundreds of millions in the struggle to defeat attempts to restore capitalism in China and, in opposition to that, to continue and deepen the socialist revolution there and support revolutionary struggles throughout the world. But, as I have analyzed, including in recent works such as *Breakthroughs* and *Hope For Humanity On A Scientific Basis*, that upsurge ran into certain limitations as well as powerful opposing forces, and it ebbed, not just in one or another country but as a worldwide phenomenon.⁸ And since that time there have been profound changes in the world, many of them negative: Capitalism has been restored in China; in the Soviet Union, where capitalism had already been restored in the 1950s but the ruling class there continued for some time to present itself as a bastion of socialism, this deception was finally abandoned as the Soviet Union itself imploded, leading to the open emergence of capitalism throughout the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; and the forces leading liberation struggles in the Third World have either been defeated or transformed into bourgeois ruling forces acting in concert with and essentially as appendages of international capital and the imperialist system. Within this country itself, in the context of this changing international situation, and through a combination of repression and the building up of middle class strata among the oppressed, along with the heightening parasitism of this system, feeding off the super-exploitation of billions of people, particularly in the Third World, over several decades there has been an increasingly deadening political atmosphere and culture and an orientation on the part of most of the forces seeking social change to restrict themselves to the limits of the existing oppressive and exploitative system and its BEB (Bourgeois Electoral Bullshit), as we have very rightly characterized it. And all this has been accompanied by a relentless ideological assault, by the ruling forces of this system and their media mouthpieces and intellectual accomplices—an assault on communism, and indeed on every positive aspect of the radical 1960s upsurge—an assault to which Mark Rudd is making his own modest contribution.

But the fact is that, with all these changes, the basis and the need for a scientifically led communist revolution has not disappeared, or diminished, but become all the more pronounced and urgently required. And not all of us who were brought forward through that great upsurge of the 1960s have abandoned the goal of radically transforming society toward the goal of a world without exploitation

and oppression and the massive violence that enforces it, and the need and possibility for communist revolution as the means for achieving this. Over what I have very rightly referred to as the “terrible decades” of recent times, some of us have persevered through the very real difficulties in working toward the achievement of that revolution and have deepened our scientific understanding of how that revolution must and can be carried out. Particularly through the work I have done over these decades, there is now a *new communism*, which is a continuation of, but also represents a qualitative leap beyond, and in some important ways a break with, communist theory as it had been previously developed and which has put communism on an even more consistently scientific basis, providing the strategy and leadership for an actual revolution and a radically new society on the road to real emancipation.⁹

In the course of the 1960s upsurge, those who became convinced of the need for radical change went about seeking that change “like peasants going off to war” taking up whatever weapons were at hand (to invoke a formulation by Lenin, who led the 1917 Russian Revolution and also made invaluable contributions to the development of communist theory). This became true, in a real and more literal sense, of the Weather Underground; but it was true *metaphorically* for some others of us—in the sense that we took up the existing theory of the communist movement at that time. This led us, correctly, to the understanding that a revolution must involve, and could only be made by, the organized struggle of masses, of millions, of people, and not by a small group isolated from those masses. But it also led us to adopt what was becoming an incorrect, outmoded concept—that, while serious attention and effort must be devoted to the fight against the oppression of Black people and other minority nationalities, and of women, and other major social questions, the main force for revolution was not just the working class in a general sense but more specifically the workers in large-scale industry—who in fact, in this country in particular, had become to a significant degree “bourgeoisified” from the parasitic spoils of imperialist domination and super-exploitation particularly in the Third World. (As a matter of fact, some of the younger workers in this situation responded favorably to the revolutionary work we were carrying out—marred and limited as it was by some misconception of the revolutionary process and by definite tendencies to *economism*, the attempt to build a movement for socialist revolution by centering it on and unfolding it around the more immediate economic demands of these workers. But the positive response of those younger workers actually had

more to do with the influence of the radical youth culture of that time than it did with the approach of combining economism with general appeals to revolution.)

As has been emphasized here, there have been major changes in this country and in the world overall since that time, decades ago—and the development of the new communism has involved, as one of its most important aspects, continuing to apply a scientific analysis to the decisive questions of the basis, the strategy and the forces for revolution—something that is spoken to in works of mine such as the book *The New Communism*¹⁰ and *Breakthroughs*, where the point is made that the backbone forces for revolution will come principally from among the tens of millions—particularly those concentrated in the inner cities, but others as well—who are subjected to savage oppression and brutal repression under this system, while it is also stressed that this revolution must involve a broad uniting of diverse social forces, especially youth and students but others as well among the middle strata, and that this must be led by a solid core of thousands and thousands, firmly grounded in the science of communism, as it has been further developed with the new communism. And I am continuing to grapple with the application of a scientific method and approach to the problems of the revolution, in this country but even more fundamentally in terms of the overall struggle toward the achievement of communism throughout the world.

In terms of the basis for revolution, the new communism emphasizes this very important understanding that is spoken to in a concentrated way in *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*.

The basis for revolution lies not in what people are thinking or doing at any given time, but resides in the fundamental relations and contradictions of the system which cause tremendous suffering but which are unresolvable under this system. (From *Hope for Humanity On A Scientific Basis: Breaking with Individualism, Parasitism and American Chauvinism*)

And “Why We Need...How We Can...” focuses on these important questions:

Why are Black people, Latinos, and Native Americans subjected to genocidal persecution, mass incarceration, police brutality, and murder?

Why is there the patriarchal degradation, dehumanization, and subjugation of all women everywhere,

and oppression based on gender or sexual orientation?

Why are there wars of empire, armies of occupation, and crimes against humanity?

Why is there the demonization, criminalization, and deportations of immigrants and the militarization of the border?

Why is the environment of our planet being destroyed?

These are what we call the “5 STOPS”—deep and defining contradictions of this system, with all the suffering and destruction they cause, which must be protested and resisted in a powerful way, with a real determination to *stop* them, but which can only be finally ended by putting an end to this system itself.

Why, along with all this, do we live in a world where large parts of humanity live in stark poverty, with 2.3 billion people lacking even rudimentary toilets or latrines and huge numbers suffering from preventable diseases, with millions of children dying *every year* from these diseases and from starvation, while 150 million children in the world are forced to engage in ruthlessly exploited child labor, and the whole world economy rests on a vast network of sweatshops, employing large numbers of women who are regularly subjected to sexual harassment and assault, a world where 65 million refugees have been displaced by war, poverty, persecution, and the effects of global warming?

Why is *this* the state of humanity?

And it provides this scientifically grounded answer:

There is one fundamental reason: the basic nature of the system of capitalism-imperialism that we live under and the way, because of its very nature, it continually perpetrates horror after horror. And, in fundamental terms, we have two choices: either, live with all this—and condemn future generations to the same, or worse, if they have a future at all—*or, make revolution!*

Can Mark Rudd (or anyone else) make the case that all this—putting an end to these “5 STOPS” and to the horrific conditions that the masses of humanity are subjected to under the domination of this system of capitalism-imperialism—can be achieved through reforms within the confines of this system and *without* the revolutionary overthrow of this system (or is the argument that the best that

can be hoped for is that all this will *continue*, but with—what objectively amounts to—minor mitigation)? No!—the emancipation of humanity from all this is profoundly and ever more urgently necessary, and the possibility of a radically different and far better future demands and requires a real revolution and the advance of humanity beyond this system, with the achievement of communism throughout the world. That this will be difficult to achieve and will require monumental, arduous and self-sacrificing struggle on the part of millions, and ultimately billions, of people, is something that no serious person—and certainly no one basing themselves on the scientific method and approach of the new communism—would deny. But a scientific analysis leads to the definite conclusion that this is as necessary as it is difficult—and that it is *possible* (not certain, and certainly not inevitable—but possible). And all those who refuse to accept the world as it is under the domination of the capitalist-imperialist system, all the unnecessary suffering this imposes on the masses of humanity and the very real existential threat it poses to humanity itself, should dedicate themselves to contributing to this revolution.

In fundamental terms there is a unity between the former infantile, essentially terrorist position that was held by the likes of Mark Rudd at a certain point and the reformist accommodation to this monstrous system which Rudd now promotes. What unifies these two seemingly opposite “political poles” is their common opposition to an actual revolution, carried out through the organized struggle of millions of people determined to overthrow the existing oppressive system and bring a much better system into being. And, in terms of *epistemology* (the approach to understanding reality), what underlies this unity of errors is the unscientific—or, fundamentally, *anti*-scientific—method and approach that characterizes both the orientation of something like the Weather Underground and the reformism into which far too many, including Mark Rudd, have allowed themselves to descend.

ENDNOTES

1. In his memoir, *From Ike to Mao and Beyond, My Journey from Mainstream America to Revolutionary Communist*, Bob Avakian recounts his own approach and efforts, as well as that of others, in struggling with soldiers and veterans of the U.S. military to win them to oppose, and lend their support to the movement of opposition to, the Vietnam war.
2. Bob Avakian, *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*. The text and video of this speech are available at revcom.us.
3. *THE TRUMP/PENCE REGIME MUST GO! In The Name of Humanity We REFUSE To Accept a Fascist America, A Better World IS Possible*. A film of this speech by Bob Avakian is available at revcom.us.
4. “Reflections on Pacific School of Religion’s Response to the Religious Right,” by Dr. Hubert Locke, also available at revcom.us.
5. This characterization of a revolutionary situation is drawn from *HOW WE CAN WIN, How We Can Really Make Revolution* (a statement from the Revolutionary Communist Party), which is cited in *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*, both available at revcom.us.
6. *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*.
7. *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*.
8. *Breakthroughs: The Historic Breakthrough by Marx, and the Further Breakthrough with the New Communism, A Basic Summary; Hope For Humanity On A Scientific Basis, Breaking with Individualism, Parasitism and American Chauvinism*. These works by Bob Avakian are available at revcom.us.
9. The strategy for revolution is spelled out in *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*; and a sweeping vision and concrete blueprint for a radically different society is contained in the *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America*, authored by Bob Avakian. The text of the Constitution, and video and the text of *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*, are available at revcom.us.
10. *THE NEW COMMUNISM, The science, the strategy, the leadership for an actual revolution, and a radically new society on the road to real emancipation*, Insight Press, 2016.

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