### **RU Speech at NY May Day**

# Working Class Is Freedon

(The following is a speech by Bob Avakian of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Union given at the New York City May Day rally on May 3rd.—Ed.)

It's a great honor to be here to speak today at this beautiful May Day rally. I think we have to ask what is the importance of this event?

All of our lives, and I'm sure this is everybody's experience, they tried to make us ashamed of our class. Tried to make our kids ashamed of the fact that their parents are workers who work with their hands. They tried to tell us to be anything, but don't be a worker and if you are, don't ever say so.

And what we're here today to do is to say we've had enough of that, we're standing up proudly and proclaiming our class—the working class.

We don't give a damn what they put on the television, we don't give a damn what they say and that's the importance of this event—that we're getting our class together. That's the thing that they fear the most, when we begin to recognize who we are and who they are. That we're the working class that does all the work, makes everything go, makes everything run, produces everything. And they're the capitalist class that produces nothing but decadence. They're the enemy and all of our struggles are more and more aimed directly and squarely at them, as this rally shows.

The importance of this rally is not the fact that there are people here speaking about the working class, though that's important. If we were up here speaking at 12 midnight, everybody'd say we were a bunch of kooks, and they'd be right. And it's not simply the fact that we have a crowd here. That doesn't scare them either. And that doesn't show our strength, 'cause there's lots of crowds every day, getting on the subway going to work.

But when we put the two together—when we put the ideas that we're uniting around and the demands that we're raising together with our numbers and our strength—that's what scares the hell out of them. And that's what gives us inspiration as we're getting here today.

There's been a lot of speeches made, and I think they all come down to one thing. We're tired of this whole set-up where a few people like Rockefeller and all the rest of those chumps sit and do nothing while we live only by working for them and are able to work for them only if we make them rich. Like the song says, the old workers song, "We've fed you all for a thousand years; and here we are still unfed."

Who the hell needs it? That's what we're proclaiming today and at all the dozens of May Days, with the thousands of workers gathering all across the country.

We are the working class. We're the class that produces everything useful in society. We are truly the most powerful class in the history of the world. You look around at everything here—the pavement you're standing on, the clothes that you're wearing, the cars that are going by—everything was made by the working class. Not a damn bit of it was made by Rockefeller! And if we can make the country run, then I got one question: Why the hell can't we run the country?

Now they tell us, "Oh, you can't do that." They tell us that workers will never get together, that it's just a dream. Well—take notice of what we're doing here "We're beginning to get together."

here.-We're beginning to get together.

Workers can go out 6,000 strong in Ohio to protect

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ers care about those few jobs? It was just a few so why not just forget it? Go on about your business and don't pay no attention. That's what the bosses and that's what their flunkies in the union leadership try to put over to us. But we know that in those few jobs also lies our jobs and our future. That's the importance of those workers fighting for those few jobs.

If we can do that, and if we can stick together, and if we can make sacrifices in these battles, even lose our homes to win something bigger —why the hell can't we stick together and take the whole deal once and for all?

We're damned sick and tired of these people sitting up like gods, deciding whether or not we're going to have a job, whether we're going to live, whether our kids are going to starve or not, We were down at the unemployment office handing out leaflets for this rally, and there was a guy that came by. He said that they had held back his unemployment check for 12 weeks. And then they turned around and told him, "because you ain't got no money we're taking your kids away." We're tired of that. They ain't taking our kids away. They ain't taking nothing more away. We've given them everything and we ain't got nothing more to give them except our fists—and more. And that's what we say now!

I'll tell you something else about this May Day.

Another worker down at the unemployment office, we handed him a leaflet and he said, "May Day? Oh, is that the day we get to kick the mayor's ass?" Excuse my language, but that's what he said. And that's sure a hell of a lot of what May Day is about. But we can't stop at the mayor because he's just one man. We have to deal with the whole class of exploiters that the mayor represents and the whole system of exploitation that he's there serving, and the next one behind him will be serving until we get rid of it.

#### They Fear Our Unity

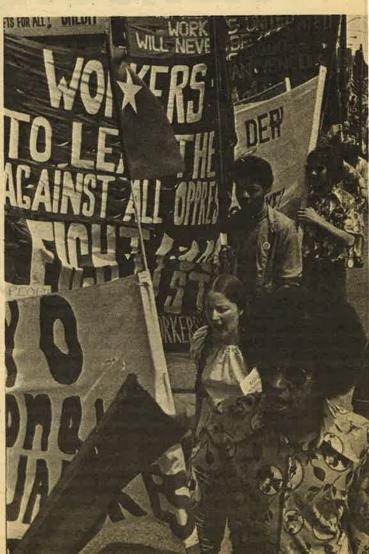
They're always trying to divide us because they fear our unity and they fear our understanding of who we are and who they are. They try to divide us nationality against nationality, race against race, foreign born against American born, men against women, this industry and that union against each other and so on. But as this May Day shows, we're breaking through all that. We don't care what kinds of nuts and provacateurs they send around to our rallies to try to distract us. We're here to express our unity and nothing

So they come around, and you notice how sweet they're talking these days? You notice how humble pie they're acting these days? They come around and they say, "We're all in this together. Now it's time for us all to pull together. We all have to make sacrifices together to get out of these hard times." And we got one answer for them when they come around saying that—we say go straight to hell!

When it comes to doing all the work. When it comes to having to live in the neighborhoods we have to live in. When it comes to having to have our kids go to the schools they have to go to. When it comes to having to go be butchered in the hospitals they'll let us go to. When it comes to fighting the wars. When it comes to all that—they don't want to talk about how we're



May Day demonstration in Dayton.



May Day demonstration in Cleveland.

all in it together. They don't want to share none of that with us.

Well, that's fine. We don't want to share with them either. We want to get rid of them. All they do is lay up and live off-of our sweat and our aches and dictate to us every day of our lives.

They don't even want us to talk to each other on the job because they're afraid we might say "There they are, let's get them." Every day and every way, every time we turn around they take another hunk out of us, and they dictate to us every day of our lives no matter how much they come across with this bull about freedom and democracy.

"You can have a Democrat or Republican. You can die by hanging or we'll chop your neck off. Which 'freedom' do you prefer?"

#### We Need Revolution in This Country

We're seeing through all that. It comes down to one thing. We need revolution in this country. We have to fight for everything we can today and in the battles ahead. We have to fight to win every battle and build our strength and organization. But why do we want to have to keep fighting just to beat back their attacks? This May Day that we're celebrating began almost 100 years ago when workers walked out for the eight hour day. And we're still fighting for the eight hour day today because we still live under the same capitalist system. We have to fight for those things, and we will and we are, but let's sweep it clean and let's get rid of it.

Sometimes they try to scare us and they say revolution is a bad thing that is against the people. But other times they have to let a little bit of what revolution is all about slip through. The fact is that change, progress, and revolution is the order of the day. It's the way the world goes. You can't stand still and hold back history. You can't hold back the tide of the people. And the people in this country, especially the working class, are going to rise up in its millions and nothing they can do can stop it.

Even they have to recognize a little bit of that. They come around and they try to pervert revolution because they know that we aspire towards change and toward revolution. So they get on TV and they say "Here's a revolutionary razor blade," or "Here's a revolutionary new coffee maker." Has anybody ever heard them advertise a reactionary razor blade? Has anybody ever heard them advertise a liberal razor blade or a conservative razor blade? No. It's always

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a revolutionary razor blade because they know the people want change and want revolution.

They can pervert it all they want, because that's all they are is perversion. That's all they can give us is perversion in one form or another. Decadence and rottenness and corruption. We don't care. They can go ahead because we're seeing through it and we're dealing with it.

Then they got the nerve to say revolution is bloody. Revolution is violent. Well that's true. A real revolution is bloody and violent, but let's check out why. Who's the cause of the violence and the bloodshed? Every damn day of our lives under this system is bloody and violent. Thousands of workers die on the job every day and they say not to worry about it. Our kids die because lead paint falls off our walls and they eat it. There's lots of diseases that we workers die of that can be cured, but we can't afford the cure and they won't give it to us because there ain't no profit in it. And then they got the biggest violence of all when they want to put us in a uniform, make us go fight other people like us who committed no greater crime than, like us, they refuse to be slaves any longer. That's where the violence comes from.

If that ain't enough they try to keep us "in our place" by coming around and shooting us down even in our own communities. Even to go out at night means they might ride by and shoot us down. Our working class has got something to say about that. When they terrorize people in Black and Latin communities, when they repress us—any of us—they're not just messing with one, they're messing with everybody.

You attack one person in our communities and you attack our communities as a whole. You're attacking the working class, buddy, and you ain't seen what we're going to give back! That's the stand of our class. That's our answer to their violence.

#### You Can't Reason With Vampires

We wish that this didn't have to be. We would like to see these changes made peacefully because we love peace. We want to go about our business and have a good life and prepare a good life for our kids.

But I would like to make this comparison. We know that in the real world vampires don't exist. But if they did and if they were terrorizing us, we'd have to get together and figure out a way to deal with them. Imagine you go up to Bela Lugosi playing Dracula and say, "Listen Mr. Dracula, don't you know it's very unkind and impolite to go around sucking people's blood? Don't you think you'd get along much better with your neighbors if you stopped that? Don't you know how people are hating you and hunting you out because you are doing this? Why don't you stop and be reasonable?"

We could say all that, if he hadn't bit our neck by the time we were through. But it wouldn't do any good because the way a vampire lives is by sucking people's blood. And you can't reason with them. There's only one way you can deal with them and that's to drive a stake through their heart!

We don't have the kind of vampires that they show on TV and in the movies. But we got something worse to deal with. We got a whole class of bloodsuckers to deal with. And we could go up to Rockefeller, and we could say, "Mr. Rockefeller, and all the rest of you, why don't you be reasonable? Why don't you stop beating us to death, leeching off us like parasites? Why don't you stop the violence and bloodshed that you cause in Vietnam and Africa and all the other parts of the world where you're driving people into the ground and trying to make slaves out of them? You'd be much more reasonable and everybody would like you better if you'd stop doing that."

Well, first of all, he ain't even got time to talk to us. But even if he did, it wouldn't'do any good. He'd be killing tens of thousands of people and driving us even harder in the time we were talking. So to deal with that class of vampires, we've got to understand the laws they live by—that they live by making profits off of us. We got to get our own ranks together, our own class together. We got to build our struggle to the point where we can drive that stake right through their heart and be rid of them forever.

We're not going to starve. We're not going to see our kids starve. And we're tired of being shot down in the streets, too. We're not some bleeding heart liberals up here talking. That's not us, the working class. We have bled enough! We're through bleeding. That's the reason our flag that you see around here, the flag of our working class in this and every other country, is red. It's red for the blood we've already shed. And we're



Students at Berkeley High School in San Francisco Bay Area hold May Day celebration, centering around the fight against police repression, and helping to build for the areawide May Day march and rally held April 26

tired of being the ones who shed all the blood and we're going to put an end to it!

People have mentioned the great victories in Vietnam and Cambodia. I think it's very important to draw inspiration from that and to learn from that. Because there you had a small nation of people up against the most powerful military machine in the history of the world—and they whipped it!

Now why was the U.S. ruling class, these vampires we're up against, throwing so much into Vietnam to put those people down? Not just to make money off them and to steal their raw materials. Not just to set up the Chase Manhattan Bank's Saigon branch. They wanted to make an example out of the Indochinese people. They wanted to say something to people all over the world who are being oppressed by these vampires and are beginning to fight back, including us here. They wanted to say, "You don't dare fight back because if you do, we'll make it so terrible for you and your kids that you'll wish you'd never started this and you'll lay back down and accept whatever we have for you." That's what they wanted to do in Vietnam.

It's like the gangsters in these movies they put out, like Godfather I and the Godfather 2. You know how

they do when they're terrorizing people and ripping them off and robbing them. If anyone stands up and resists it, they have to make an example out of them. They have to do something terrifying to them so nobody else will fight back.

That's exactly what our ruling class tried to do in

That's exactly what our ruling class tried to do in Vietnam. We're up against a ruling class that makes the Godfather look like Mary Poppins! But they got crushed in Vietnam. They got crushed in Cambodia, and lots of our own working class brothers that they sent over to fight, as you heard the brother (veteran) say earlier, have learned a lesson and are now ready to fight for real against them once and for all.

I've been talking about revolution. Now I want to talk about another word that's supposed to be real scarey. It's the goal of revolution. And that word is communism.

I'm a communist now, but I wasn't always—as far as I know, nobody's ever been born one. The first time I met a communist, I'll tell you, I was probably like a lot of you people out there. I was scared. I went over to their house. They served me some coffee and said "Sit down in the kitchen." I was looking all around. You know what I was looking for? I was looking for that little button they were going to push to open the trap door so's I'd go down in the basement and some-body'd chain me to the wall and give me a book by Karl Marx and say "You will never get out of here until you read this." But it ain't like that.

#### What Is Communism?

What does the word "communism" mean? The capitalists have got a reason to be scared of it because it means their doom and it means the emancipation of the working class. What does the word mean? "Communism"—it means "in common."

Just think about it. That is the life, that is the experience of the working class. That is our position in society. We do things in common. We produce everything in common. There's no one person who produced all this—we produced it in common and in our millions.

When you work on an assembly line, with a big conveyor belt in front of you, you got your little part in front of you. Now it don't do no good for you to jump up and say, "Hey, that's my two feet of conveyor belt, I want it, I'm going to take it home." We can't accomplish nothing like that. The problem isn't that we have all this mass production built up. That's not a bad thing, but a good thing. The problem is that we don't control it. We don't use it in common for the common good of the great majority of the people and that's the working class.

Communism ain't nothing more than us getting rid of them and their system of ripping us off for the private gain of a few, and us the working class in our millions deciding in common how to develop society to meet our needs for today and provide for the future.

Ain't nothing scarey about that to us. We're the working class that's going to make it happen. The people it's scarey to is them, the capitalist class. Because you know what might happen? Those of them that are still left after the revolution has reached a point where we've overthrown them—we'll deal them a fate worse than death for them. We'll make them go to work.

We're going to make them work under our supervision. We're not going to let them dictate to us anymore. We're going to dictate to them. Why are we going to do that? Because they're always going to try and make a comeback. They don't believe us ordinary.

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May Day march in Oakland.