Robert Avakian was born March 7, 1943 in Washington D.C., but little is known about him until July 22, 1967, when, at the close of a meeting of the Bay Area Emergency Action Committee, a circular was distributed which contained a proposal by Avakian that guns be purchased for the use of black people. Avakian was among hundreds arrested in actions that ignited campuses across the U.S. By 1965, Avakian says, “I hated this country, the way it treated Black people and others. Here was a people around the world; the bloody facts, the hypocrisy, the way that people were treated. The move of the U.S. government was there for the benefit of the Vietnamese people.”

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The student movement that rocked the country in the 1960s was sparked by the struggle of Black people. The first shot in this decade of campus turmoil was fired with the Free Speech Movement at the U.C. Berkeley campus. Avakian was among hundreds arrested in actions that ignited campuses across the U.S. The Vietnam War was a major issue confronting students and the whole country at that time. Thousands studied, debated and demonstrated over U.S. involvement there. Avakian, like many, had questions: Could it be true that the U.S. government was there for the benefit of the Vietnamese people? The explosion in Selma, Alabama shook the last bits of illusions from his eyes and propelled him into action against the war. “The government would not hesitate to unleash dogs, bayonets and clubs against Black Americans, they could only be up to no good in Vietnam.”

The Free Speech Movement in 1964 was a key figure in that struggle. At the same time, the U.S. government was involved in actions that ignited campuses across the country, from the standpoint of patronizing the chains, but from the stand of the multi-national working class which aims to break them.

By 1968, Avakian was the driving force in forming the Revolutionary Union (RU), forerunner to the RCP. Avakian was elected Chairman of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party at May Day rally, May 5, 1979 in Washington D.C. Includes historic call for revolutionary May Day demonstrations on May 1st 1980.