

AN OPEN LETTER:

ENGAGING WITH AND DEBATING RAYMOND LOTTA ON COMMUNISM

Raymond Lotta is undertaking something unique and important on the campus scene. Through writings and a campus speaking tour, he is seeking to break open debate about communism's past, present, and future. It is a debate that has largely been ruled off the intellectual agenda—and he aims to put that discussion back on the map. At the University of Chicago last November, 320 people, the vast majority undergraduate students, crowded into a lecture hall to hear and to engage with Lotta.

As an informed and ardent advocate of communism, Raymond Lotta is bringing into the intellectual and political discourse valuable historical analysis and understanding of the experience of socialist revolution in the 20th century. He is addressing what the Russian and Chinese revolutions, especially the Cultural Revolution, set out to do, what they accomplished, what their shortcomings and problems were, and why. He is introducing people to Bob Avakian's radical vision of socialism and communism for today's world.

He is inviting a new generation of students, and professors and intellectuals, to engage with these ideas.

Raymond Lotta is also challenging liberal intellectuals who are influential proponents of anticommunism, as well as scholars of the Russian and Chinese revolutions, to debate him in the public square. For Lotta's challenge to go unanswered perpetuates what is essentially a one-sided conversation in the university—and robs people of a special opportunity to compare and contrast analysis over a question with enormous stakes: what does historical experience reveal about the possibility for remaking society and changing values through revolution?

Raymond Lotta says his tour is part of initiating a new stage of communist revolution. We ourselves have different views about socialism and communism. But we agree that robust dialogue and debate about the history and relevance of communism enriches the discourse of whether a radically different world is possible. It is vital to the search for the truth and to the spread of critical thinking and ferment in the academy and society.

In this spirit:

- 1) We call on major intellectual theorists and advocates of the view that communism is a “failed utopia,” as well as scholars who analyze events like the Cultural Revolution as a “horror,” to answer Lotta's challenge to debate.**
- 2) We call on students and professors to engage with Raymond Lotta's work and analysis, and to bring their most deeply-felt questions and concerns about revolution and communism to his programs.**

Signatories

Andrew Ross, Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis, New York University, author of *Fast Boat to China: High-Tech Outsourcing and the Consequences of Free Trade*

Dongping Han, Professor of History, Warren Wilson College, author of *The Unknown Cultural Revolution*

Bai Di, Director of Chinese and Asian Studies, Drew University, author of *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era*

Robert Cliver, Assistant Professor of History, Humboldt State University

John Hutnyk, Academic Director, Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London