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The importance of critical thinking is an important theme of *From Ike to Mao and Beyond*. This approach influenced Bob Avakian's development in the transformation he went through as an individual. He was going along with his life, with a middle class background, then he began to change. There were 3 main themes that influenced his life: communism, socialism, and the civil rights movement.

One example of Bob Avakian looking for the truth was described in the book when Kennedy made a speech during the Cuban Missile Crisis incident in Cuba. He said the U.N. charter forbade the Soviet Union from having missiles in Cuba. Bob Avakian went to look up the U.N. Charter, read it several times and found out he had been lied to.

As a professor, I and other professors want their students to be critical thinkers. This book can open people up to an approach of how to look at things with a critical eye. My mom who is from the South has commented that growing up there you understood where you stood because people would just come out and say what they thought. People like George Wallace (an extremely racist former Governor of Alabama) would just outright say he thought Blacks were inferior. Whereas in the North there would be a covering up of how people thought.

During the Civil rights period, people felt deeply that there needed to be a change and they were willing to do something about it. They had to "step outside of the box" in willing to go out and dare to struggle for something different with different people. They did not know the outcome of what would happen if they did this. That is what is needed today. People need to take risks and not accept what's going on. Bob Avakian did this with his life. He was looking for the truth and he has pursued that, not knowing where that would lead him, taking risks.

I was talking to a friend about the memoir, and my friend said, "Dude. This is communism you're talking about." I said, "Look into it. Did you ever read the Communist Manifesto? Communism on paper is a beautiful thing. Just because things happened in Russia or China that weren't good, you shouldn't reject it. Capitalism has very wealthy people, a middle class, but a lot of people are two paychecks away from poverty. Under capitalism there are a few people who hoard all the wealth." After this back and forth, my friend is now reading the book. I believe people can get drawn into the story from a humanistic approach. If you go through Bob's story, you get to see how he came to discover socialism and communism.

The students need to read this.