



NAACCCCP

by Stephen Schwartz

There is a reason the press coverage of Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.'s appointment to the top post in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has dealt so superficially with his background. For Chavis is more than an African-American militant; he is the successor to Angela Davis as the most prominent public figure associated in recent years with the Moscow-funded, hard-line Communist Party, USA.

Indeed, since 1973, he has been the titular leader of a rival N-double-A, the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (NAARPR), which happens to be the CPUSA's legal defense arm. His involvement in pro-Soviet activities far exceeds that of Johnnetta Cole, his fellow-member of the Clinton presidential transition team. (Cole, president of Atlanta's Spelman College and first in line for secretary of education, was removed from consideration when the gross nature of her long involvement with the CPUSA, the Castro regime, and the Communist dictatorship of Grenada was exposed.)

Hillary Clinton's role in these affairs is perturbing, since Chavis's jump to the NAACP from the NAARPR seems to have been accomplished via the Clinton transition team, and Hillary was reputedly the patroness of Cole. It only recently came to light that Hillary served a law-school internship in the law firm of Robert Treuhaft, a long-term Communist Party associate in the San Francisco Bay Area, and husband of England's most famous Red Snob, the egregious Jessica Mitford. (But for a glitch in the stream of history, Mitford, whose

family ran to political extremism, might have become Hitler's sister-in-law.) Nobody can yet say how much of Mitford-Treuhaft rubbed off on Hillary during her summer internship in 1970.¹

One must take into account the fact, little noted except by historians, that the CPUSA had, for many decades, a higher profile among African-Americans than in the broader strata of American society. That some African-Americans would use the party as a publicity asset is understandable—

¹ In the *East Bay Express*, a Berkeley weekly, for April 9, Mitford says she stayed in the Communist Party, which she joined in the 1940s, until she and Treuhaft publicly quit the party in 1958 because "the CP bigwigs cared not a hoot about what local community people were saying." Thus, Mitford and Treuhaft, unfazed by Stalinism, date their disillusionment from the discovery that the CP in Northern California was run by unresponsive bureaucrats!

Davis herself provides the most obvious example—but the easy access of such prominent CPUSA supporters as Chavis and Cole into the higher circles of political responsibility is disturbing.

One could say Chavis owes his job at the NAACP to Andrei Sakharov. For the NAARPR, backed by the Kremlin, crafted the 1970s campaign in favor of the Chavis-led "Wilmington Ten" as a specific response to Jimmy Carter's international human rights campaign, focusing on the Soviet empire's prisoners of conscience. The Wilmington Ten were convicted in North Carolina of arson and conspiracy to shoot at police and fire personnel during urban troubles in 1971 and 1972. Whatever the justice of the trial and verdict, the origin of the international campaign on the defendants' behalf is unarguable.

In a 1977 letter to President Carter, Chavis wrote: "We are equally as well 'prisoners of conscience.'" He said the worldwide counteroffensive in his favor had "been fostered by all governments that see the hypocrisy of our foreign policy—criticism of other countries for so-called violations of human rights when we have human rights violations within our own borders." (The governments gifted with superior vision regarding our "hypocrisy" included, mainly, those of the USSR, East Germany, and Cuba.) The *Washington Post* noted that "Soviet leaders point to the case as a symbol of injustice in the U.S.," and when the Ten's sentences were reduced in 1978, the *New York Times* paraphrased Chavis himself, declaring that "the press of the Soviet Union and other Communist nations has cited the conviction of the Ten as an example of U.S. hypocrisy."

The NAARPR was set up under



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the aegis of Angela Davis. Chavis appeared at the group's founding convention in 1973 as a co-vice-chairperson with Charlene Mitchell, 1968 Communist presidential candidate and in effect an overseas functionary of the Soviet government, responsible with CPUSA boss Gus Hall for running the party. The 1973 meeting was attended or endorsed by the entire Soviet-subsidized leadership of the CPUSA, including such illustrious Communists as John Abt and Jessica Smith, deeply involved in the Hiss/Chambers case; and Herbert and Bettina Aptheker, father and daughter, longtime CP partisans. The party's arts cadre was also supportive: poet Walter Lowenfels, actor John Randolph, and banjoist Pete Seeger. Other associated names, famous for the defense of Stalinism, included that of a Hollywood Ten member, the onetime screenwriter and permanent party hack, John Howard Lawson.

That Chavis remains an apologist for a dead Communism is clear from a comment in the *New York Times* of April 11. Chavis describes how he met his wife, a Dominican translator at the Angolan Embassy in Paris. He visited the embassy frequently while fighting the Reagan administration's support for UNITA, the Angolan anti-Communist rebels. "I couldn't abide the idea that the U.S. was trying to subvert a legitimately elected African government," he declared. (*Excuse me?* No direct elections of any kind were held in Angola until well after the Reagan era.)

Chavis's willingness to lend himself to Soviet active measures against the U.S. shows at the very least an alarming myopia about hard-line Communism. Nor was he simply an individual facing prosecution, who took his friends where he could find them; his career as a Soviet apologist continued long after his legal case. But the Chavis problem emerges not from the past threat of a now-defunct Communism but from what it says about an individual's judgment. Namely, it demonstrates an utter incomprehension of the meaning of democracy and political pluralism, two concepts that seem of obvious importance to the NAACP's work.

It's thus hardly coincidental that one of the few issues on which Chavis has spoken out boldly is the Lani Guinier nomination. In early June he was widely quoted as saying that "Senate Democrats

don't have the stomach to stand up to those right-wing Republicans." (It is curious, too, that the Congressional Black Caucus specifically threatened to block aid to the former USSR if Guinier was not confirmed.)

The Guinier affair involves more than extremist writings: neglected through most of the debate was discussion of her parents' careers. Lani's father Ewart Guinier, who died last year, was a wheelhorse of American Stalinism decades before his rise to academic respectability in Harvard's Afro-American Studies department. From 1946 to 1953 he was a high official of the United Public Workers of America, one of eleven unions expelled from the CIO in 1950 for being completely dominated by the Kremlin. (Others included the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers and the notorious longshoremen under Harry Bridges—whose CPUSA affiliation was confirmed in these pages last December by Harvey Klehr and John Haynes.)

During his UPWA period, Guinier was also a leading figure in New York's American Labor Party. In the late 1940s, the ALP underwent a bruising factional fight between the Stalinists grouped around the ALP's sole congressman, the notoriously corrupt Vito Marcantonio, and a group of anti-Stalinist socialists. As a Marcantonio protégé and frequent ALP candidate, Guinier threw himself into this struggle, and was even sued for libel (inconclusively) in 1949 by Eugene Connolly, a non-Stalinist ALP member of the New York city council whom Guinier had called "anti-Negro."

If that style of rhetoric sounds familiar, so will another aspect of Guinier's ALP activities. The American Labor Party owed its political successes in no small part to the fact that New York City elections were then run on the basis of proportional representation—precisely the system Guinier's daughter Lani would seek to impose at the national level four decades later. This format allowed ALP Stalinists to win municipal seats, and even made it possible for such characters as Peter V. Cacchione and Benjamin Davis, Jr. to win council seats repeatedly on the open ticket of the Communist Party. Proportional representation was abolished by voters in New York in 1950, to great lamentations by the comrades done in by a popular move to "get the Commies out of office."

Prior to his UPWA and ALP work, Guinier and his wife had been prominent leftist leaders in the then-territory of Hawaii, where the CPUSA pursued some of its most subversive projects. While a warrant officer in the U.S. Army, Guinier served as an instructor at the Honolulu Labor Canteen—a CP soul-catching operation that was a focus for maritime and military agitation around the Pacific—where he taught the history of the Soviet Union. In Hawaii, the Guiniers were active in efforts to assure the speedy withdrawal of American servicemen from Asia at the end of World War II, in order to leave the field open for Communist influence. In a Senate investigation of UPWA, Guinier refused to testify whether or not he was a Communist Party member.

Rep. Dick Armey of Texas, chairman of the House Republican Conference, recently told a Texas audience that Hillary Clinton "hangs around with a lot of Marxists. All her friends are Marxists." After an uproar in newspapers over the next few days, Armey withdrew the remark.

He shouldn't have. □

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Bogus Charlie Stenholm

by Grover G. Norquist

On Thursday afternoon, May 27, 1993, Texas congressman Charlie Stenholm cast his vote in favor of Bill Clinton's budget reconciliation package, which increases taxes by \$300 billion over the next five years and increases spending from \$1.5 trillion this year to \$1.8 trillion in 1998. More than a dozen moderate Democrats followed Stenholm's lead, giving Clinton his first major legislative victory by a margin of 219-213. Both Republicans and Democrats agree that without Stenholm's support and influence, Clinton's package would have died in the House.

Only days before the final vote, taxpayer groups and business lobbies believed they had the votes to defeat the package, which would have forced Speaker Tom Foley to withdraw the bill from consideration until after the Memorial Day recess. It was hoped that once congressmen were in their districts, they would be subjected to the growing anger of taxpayers. Just as the Dole filibuster against Clinton's \$16.5 billion "stimulus" package was strengthened by the April recess, so too would the anti-tax forces in the House gain strength through any delay.

One reason people believed that Clinton's package was in serious trouble was Stenholm's announcement that he would insist on real caps in entitlement spending. The Washington press corps frequently calls Stenholm for the "moderate" or "conservative" Democratic spin on issues, and for ten years, Democratic congressmen who've wanted to distance themselves from the party's liberal ideology have looked to Stenholm as their standard-bearer. If Stenholm had stood his ground—demanding real spending

reduction and real caps on entitlements—Clinton would have lost on May 27.

But Stenholm caved. The Democratic leadership allowed him to attach a toothless "entitlement review process" that even Ways and Means Chairman Rostenkowski belittled as "bells and whistles." Stenholm's collapse was so total that it led tax activist Peter Roff to complain, "After a dive like that, someone should call the boxing commissioner."

The fury of conservative congressmen at Stenholm's betrayal was unprecedented, not simply because of the size of the package Stenholm forced through, but because it was the latest in a series of efforts to cut spending that Stenholm endorsed and then undermined. Members were angry at Stenholm, but also at themselves for being fooled—yet again—into thinking Stenholm would stand firm. Sadder and wiser, one member likened Stenholm to the cartoon character Lucy who each fall holds the football out for Charlie Brown, only to pull it away at the last minute.

Some argue that Stenholm is simply weak: he can't stand up to pressure. Richard Billmire of the National Republican Campaign Committee recalls that when the winds were blowing from the right in the early 1980s, Stenholm was "terrified of Ronald Reagan" and could be counted on as a sure vote in support of the contras and the Reagan tax and budget cuts. "Bush did not scare Stenholm," Billmire says, but now Foley and Clinton do. Or it might just be that Stenholm's double-dealing stems from his own drive for power, which requires that he ultimately please the Democratic leadership.

House Republican Whip Newt Gingrich sees Stenholm as an active part of the leadership's strategy, providing cover for Democrats in swing districts

who have to pretend to be moderates. Gingrich likens Stenholm to the Washington Generals, the basketball team that barnstorms with the Harlem Globetrotters. "Their job is to make it look interesting, make it look close even, but in the end to lose gracefully."

Stenholm's usefulness to the Democratic leadership was underscored in 1989, when he was given the post of deputy whip. A whip's job is to line up votes for the leadership's position—an odd job for an honest dissident. Stenholm has also been rewarded with a plum assignment on the Budget Committee. By contrast, when then-Democrat Phil Gramm bucked the House leadership in the early 1980s to co-sponsor Reagan's first tax cuts, he was stripped of his committee assignments.

Former New Hampshire congressman Chuck Douglas led the fight for a balanced-budget amendment in 1990—which Stenholm purportedly supported—and has vivid memories of the "help" Stenholm offered. Because the Democratic leadership would not allow the amendment out of committee and onto the House floor, Douglas circulated a discharge petition, a little-used parliamentary mechanism that forces a vote on a piece of bottled-up legislation if a majority of members sign on. "When we were within two votes of forcing the discharge," Douglas recalls, "we saw Stenholm up at the front desk talking with the Speaker. Throughout the entire process Stenholm was always trying to slow us down; we were certain he was warning Speaker Foley, and so I rushed up two more signers and we discharged the balanced-budget amendment. This is what we had been working on for months. Charlie's reaction—he was livid!"

Douglas adds that Stenholm "violently" opposed any balanced-budget amendment that limited tax hikes, such as Texas Rep. Joe Barton's proposal to require a

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