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Maoists move in on Manhattan Dems

By HARVEY KLEHR

New York City has become the laboratory for a violent, ultra-left political sect that embarked on a calculated campaign three years ago to infiltrate the Democratic Party. In 1984 the group, best known as the Communist Workers Party (CWP), outlined in its newspaper a plan to "take over a great deal of the local apparatus of the Democratic Party."

Success has come more quickly than the CWP could possibly have imagined. In just three short years, the group has succeeded in gaining a political foothold in Greenwich Village and on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The Maoist CWP achieved notoriety in 1979 when five of its members were killed in a gun battle with Nazis and Ku Klux Klansmen in Greensboro, North Carolina. Today one of its leaders sits on the New York State Democratic Committee after being endorsed by Governor Cuomo, one of its front groups has won more than \$3,000,000 in government grants and loans, and it has become a major force in the Village Independent Democrats, a storied Greenwich Village political club.

First, some background. Throughout its history the CWP has engaged in violent and disruptive behavior. Prior to the 1980 Democratic National Convention in New York's Madison Square Garden, the CWP called on Party members to "Crash the Garden Party!" 300 CWP members and supporters, wielding clubs and ax-handles, attempted to do so and engaged in a pitched battle with police; twenty-one were arrested. Even other radicals deplored the CWP's penchant for violence. The radical newspaper, the *Guardian*, criticized the Party for having "spray-painted and smoke-bombed various offices and thrown eggs at politicians." The *Guardian* also complained that the CWP, under its previous name, Workers Viewpoint Organization, had broken up rival communist groups' meetings, throwing chairs on stage and attacking ideological rivals with baseball bats and hammers. Anyone inclined to confuse the CWP with a peaceful democratic socialist group would have been stopped short by its six-page membership application, which included questions about the extent of the

applicant's training with firearms and in the martial arts.

The Party's rhetoric was no more appealing than its tactics. Its heroes included Joseph Stalin and Pol Pot, whose successful revolution in Cambodia, the Party asserted, had been undermined by false CIA propaganda that he had massacred huge numbers of people. The CWP frequently denounced "fascist Zionists" and the American "Zionist press." Its publically proclaimed goal was to "overthrow this rotten capitalist system by violence and establish a socialist system—the dictatorship of the proletariat."

By the mid-1980s, however, the CWP came to realize that its apocalyptic style had become counter-productive. As early as 1981 two CWP leaders wrote that the Party, which had previously scorned electoral politics, might have to work "through 'legitimate' forms" to achieve its goals. By 1984 the CWP had endorsed Jesse Jackson's presidential candidacy. Jerry Tung, general secretary of the CWP, concluded that year that entering the Democratic Party made sense because "we can get funding from the Democrats to sustain our struggles." It was an accurate prediction.

In 1985 the CWP changed its name to the New Democratic Movement. The documents of the founding convention, however, made clear that the Party was only changing its marketing tactics, not its long-term goal. One leader urged training members "to become better professional revolutionaries." Tung, still in charge, explained that instead of seeking to foment revolution nation-wide, the NDM would work from the bottom up, establishing "local power."

The New Democratic Movement has maintained a low profile since its founding almost two years ago. Instead, the CWP has used Asian-Americans for Equality (AAFE) as its stalking-horse in the New York Democratic Party. AAFE and its leaders have been unwilling to acknowledge the organizational connection between AAFE and the largely Chinese-American CWP. The ties between the two groups, however, are too close and too numerous to be mere coincidence:

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- In the late 1970s and early 1980s AAFE and the CWP openly operated out of the same second-floor office at 1 East Broadway in Manhattan and shared a telephone number, 233-0988.
- In 1980 the CWP's newspaper described AAFE as "a mass organization in Chinatown with leadership from the Communist Workers Party."
- Margaret Chin served as a national spokesperson for the CWP at press conferences held in the joint AAFE-CWP offices in the wake of the Greensboro shootings in 1979. From 1982-1986 Chin was President of AAFE.
- Jerry Tung, who was General Secretary of the CWP throughout its existence, is a member of AAFE's Board of Advisors.
- Tung's business, Advance Graphic, helped to produce AAFE's most recent fund-raising journal and has also done typesetting for the campaigns of AAFE members who have run for local Democratic Party offices in New York.
- Earle Tockman, who was identified in the press as a CWP attorney and a Party "supporter" after the Greensboro killings, is AAFE's legal counsel.
- Marion Yuen, identified in a 1980 CWP press release as a Party "press officer," was a member of AAFE's Board of Directors as recently as 1985.
- Shirley Yan, now AAFE's Treasurer, was its President from 1980 to 1982 when it operated side-by-side with the CWP at 1 E. Broadway. Yan's husband, Sam Mui, succeeded Margaret Chin as AAFE President last September.
- The telephone number used by AAFE and the CWP at 1 E. Broadway was listed in the name of R. Chin. One of the members of AAFE's Board of Directors is Ronald Chin. Asked recently whether the phone had been in his name, Ronald Chin did not deny it: "I don't know how to respond to these things. I guess if everybody looked in the books . . .," his voice trailed off. He denies having been a member of the CWP. In 1976, however, Ronald Chin was charged with assault and reckless endangerment for driving a van into three policemen and a horse at a May Day rally in New York's Herald Square. (He later pled guilty to harassment in the incident.) Chin told his supervisor at work that he had been at the demonstration under the auspices of AAFE (then named Asian-Americans for Equal Employment); a search of the van he was driving uncovered banners and armbands bearing the hammer and sickle, with literature to match.
- AAFE and the CWP have over the years staged joint protest demonstrations in New York and California.

AAFE has also shown an affinity for the bullying and provocative tactics beloved by the CWP. In August 1985 the Chinese Reporters' Association issued a statement decrying AAFE efforts "to physically attack, harass, intimidate or threaten legal action against our members" in response to adverse news coverage. On April 14, 1986 AAFE members disrupted a public hearing on housing development in Chinatown. Doris Koo, executive director of AAFE, accused participants of being "traitors and running dogs," according to the Chinese press. An assortment of Lower East Side groups jointly assailed AAFE "for creating a climate of fear and intimidation" at the meeting.

The story of AAFE's dramatic success in obtaining political influence and government grants follows a script written by Jerry Tung and other CWP members. At the founding convention of the NDM, a resolution on strategy and tactics called for concentrating cadres and resources in local areas "where we think we can succeed." One of those areas was New York where, Tung boasted, the CWP had been able to build organizations and engage in electoral work in mutually beneficial ways: the two, he explained, "help each other, leveraging each other . . . creating jobs and projects and enhancing our authority and influence as well as making money."

The resolution on strategy and tactics stressed the necessity of obtaining large sums of money to carry out the Party's plans: "in order for us to take local power and sustain it as a model, we require direct NDM finances in the order of magnitude of hundreds of thousands of dollars in each locality and state, or in indirect revenue . . . of millions and tens of millions of dollars. This could be either public or private . . . Any local power plan that does not include concrete ties and friends that can muster this kind of finances or resources is an idealist plan reflecting extreme amateurishness and its not worthy of serious consideration."

AAFE has faithfully followed the script. Its members have thrown themselves into Democratic electoral politics and used their political ties to generate government grants.

AAFE's prized success story is Margaret Chin, its President until her election, with support from the Village Independent Democrats, to the Democratic State Committee from the 61st Assembly District, which includes Greenwich Village. Chin identified herself as a member of the Communist Workers Party at a New York press conference in November 1979. She was one of three Party spokesmen who vowed to avenge the Greensboro murders and her picture appeared in the *New York Times*.

Chin was not the only AAFE activist to flourish in the Village Independent Democrats, which has for many years been the pre-eminent Democratic club in the Village. A substantial number of VID members worked in the Jesse Jackson campaign, where they met AAFE and CWP members like Margaret Chin, who were prominent participants in the Rainbow Coalition. Soon afterwards, AAFE and CWP members began joining the VID in large numbers. In the past three years AAFE members have become committee chairs,

executive committee members and even officers of VID. Former CWP press officer Marion Yuen became co-chair of VID's Peace and Foreign Policy Committee. Even Jerry Tung's wife, Spring Wang, was a VID officer.

Last summer, with VID desperately short of campaign funds for a heated primary battle, its CWP friends came to the rescue. VID's campaign received contributions not only from Jerry Tung and Spring Wang, now residents of affluent Scarsdale, but also from at least four former members of the North Carolina CWP cell that organized the ill-fated Greensboro confrontation. More important, Tung's Advance Graphic extended \$5,000 worth of credit to VID for campaign printing. The total in cash and credit from CWP figures amounted to more than 20 percent of VID's entire campaign budget.

AAFE and CWP activists have used their political ties to VID and City Councilwoman Miriam Friedlander, a VID member, to win election and appointment to a number of positions. Bill Chong, an AAFE officer, and Margaret Chin have served on Community Board No. 3, an appointive body that gives advice to the city on zoning, spending and service delivery in the area. Minerva Chin, an AAFE member described as "a supporter of the CWP" by the Party newspaper several years ago, was elected in 1983 to the Lower East Side Area Policy Board, which controls the distribution of federal anti-poverty funds.

Through its VID connection AAFE has been able to win respectability in more exalted political circles in New York. In January 1987, Bill Chong was appointed as Assistant to the Commissioner of the State Division of Human Rights, a \$31,000-a-year job. The Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Division is Catherine Abate, VID's district leader until last year. Margaret Chin received the endorsement of Governor Mario Cuomo in her campaign for the State Committee. An aide to the governor told columnists Evans and Novak that Cuomo endorsed Chin only because VID had asked him to.

The access to state government provided by VID has also had more concrete benefits. AAFE has recently won approval for about two million dollars in grants from the state of New York. One grant, for just over a million dollars, comes from the state's Department of Social Services. A second state award, for \$825,000, is from the Division of Housing and Community Renewal. In addition, a loan of \$1.25 million from New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development is awaiting final clearance. AAFE has also received over \$100,000 in awards from city and state agencies to pay administrative salaries for AAFE staff, office rent and utilities, as well as a substantial grant from the Area Policy Board on which Minerva Chin sits. These awards were all made after AAFE's successful march through VID.

The bulk of the public money allocated to AAFE is to build "Equality House," a proposed shelter for the Asian homeless, in a building to be turned over to AAFE by the City of New York. "Equality House" may have been just what Jerry Tung had in mind when he explained one of the major advantages of electoral politics: "once you get people elected or appointed to office, you can award contracts to friends and then recruit them on that basis." The Asian homeless on the Lower East Side, it appears, may not be the only beneficiaries of New York's largesse.

Another long-time CWP leader suddenly flourishing on the Manhattan political scene is Phil Thompson, who recently landed a position on the staff of Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins, a close VID ally. In 1985, Jerry Tung noted that "a borough presidency in New York . . . is on top of billions of dollars. Before any new construction, before anything happens in that borough, it has to go through that borough president. If you are a borough president, you are in a position to tell a corporation it can build here if it puts money into something you want funded. And that is how we have to begin seeing our political work."

Working for a mainstream politician like Dinkins represents a stark shift for Thompson, who in 1980 explained that "the only way to end exploitation of working people and the oppression of . . . minorities is to overthrow monopoly capitalism and build a society where workers and oppressed revolutionaries rule over the capitalists — and that means socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Both Margaret Chin and Doris Koo, AAFE's Executive Director, refused recently to answer any questions about AAFE's links to the CWP. VID President Bruce Feffer refused to discuss AAFE's relationship with either the VID or CWP. VID district leader Tony Hoffmann expressed little concern in a recent interview about Chin's CWP background, detailed last year by the *New York Post*. Even if she had once been in the CWP, he maintained, her present policies are "mainstream Democratic."

New York Democrats, however, ought to be alarmed about the infiltration of their party by a band of communist revolutionaries with a long history of violence. That these new "Democrats" remain committed to their longstanding goals was made chillingly clear by Jerry Tung himself.

Concluding the NDM's founding convention, Tung noted that in formally dissolving the CWP, "we folded our old banner and called to an end a chapter of our political development. It was very moving and we sang 'The Internationale.' I think it is probably the last time we will sing 'The Internationale' together. But when we achieve cultural hegemony in this country, then we can sing it once more, together." The report noted that this remark was met with applause and chants of "NDM! NDM! NDM! Local power! Local power! Local power!"

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ADLAI E. STEVENSON

August 28, 1987

Dear Fellow Democrat:

I am writing to you about a situation that has developed in Greenwich Village which is reminiscent of the disaster which befell the Democratic Party in my home state of Illinois last year.

As you may recall, there was shock across the nation last year when followers of the extremist, Lyndon LaRouche, won the Illinois Democratic Primary for two statewide offices. In order to avoid running on a ticket with these bizarre, anti-Semitic extremists, I was forced to give up the Democratic nomination for Governor and run as an independent. Needless to say, the Democratic Party was left in a shambles, and the Republicans won the governorship.

Something similar could happen in Greenwich Village. According to the enclosed article, another bizarre group, best known as the "Communist Workers Party," has gained a foothold in the Village by putting down roots in the Village Independent Democrats (VID), once a leader in Manhattan's Reform movement.

The article appeared recently in Our Town, the same newspaper which led the way in exposing Lyndon LaRouche several years ago. Although the article is long, I urge you to read it carefully. It indicates that leaders of the VID have welcomed the CWP, helping CWP members and followers gain positions of influence in government and in the Democratic Party.

For the good of our party, please read the Our Town article before voting in the September 15 Democratic Primary for Democratic District Leader. In that primary, you will have an opportunity to reject extremism by voting for two mainstream liberal Democrats, Tim James and Liz Shollenberger, and against the candidates of the VID. A vote for Tim James and Liz Shollenberger will send a clear message that there is no room for CWP-style extremism in the New York Democratic Party. Please make a point of voting on September 15, even if you might not ordinarily do so in an off-year like this.

Sincerely,



Adlai E. Stevenson

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