

# Paul Sweezy joins the Trilateral Commission

by EIR's Special Correspondent

From April 22 to 24, a gathering of 450-500 representatives of the international radical and Marxist left took place in Sheffield, England, on the theme, "U.S. Imperialism in the 1990s: Of Presidents and Present Dangers." At first glance, the conference might simply appear as the coming-together of the international radical fringe, celebrating the "crisis of capitalism" and the problems faced by "American imperialism."

What made the event curious, is that such scraggly types as *Monthly Review* magazine hack Paul Sweezy and the circle around British Labour Party socialist Anthony Wedgwood-Benn, found themselves utilizing the same premises and arguments as David Rockefeller's Trilateral Commission and the New York Council on Foreign Relations' *Foreign Affairs* magazine.

Both the radical left and the Trilateraloids have come to the conclusion that "the era of American global hegemony" is over, and that America's decline is irreversible. The main agenda items of the Sheffield meeting were keyed to the content of a recent article in *Foreign Affairs* by Leonard Silk, David Calleo, et al. The questions posed were, "Is the United States in decline? Are there other conceivable hegemonic powers? What are the parallels and the contradictions, between now and the 1930s? Is conflict between the leading capitalist nations going to grow?"

As one European participant at the Sheffield meeting said in a private discussion, "Certainly, if you look at Paul Kennedy's *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, you see the same concerns. But he and his co-thinkers in the American Establishment believe that the American decline must be managed as smoothly and as slowly as possible. We say, by contrast, how can America's relative decline be made most usefully creative from the standpoint of collective emancipation on a world scale? We want to mobilize the popular movements, in the Philippines, for example."

Sweezy, in his speech at Sheffield, discussed the "old left"-American Establishment convergence explicitly. In the words of one conference organizer:

"Paul Sweezy brought this question to the fore. He pointed to the permanent crisis of capitalism, and said that the Establishment in the United States is finally convinced that wars won't be a viable way out. It was most interesting to see Sweezy and others discuss the American Establishment in

this way.

"The conference discussions took place against the backdrop of the American presidential elections. Sweezy and others pointed to the reality that postwar American imperialism may be coming to an end, the postwar order is eroding. Competing states are emerging, in Europe, and there is Japan. There is a new challenge from the Third World. The U.S., of course, is still the leader of the pack, so to speak, but is nonetheless in economic decline. Obviously, certain books coming out in the U.S. reflect the mood. There is the famous Paul Kennedy book. That and others are becoming bestsellers. As Sweezy stressed, the American Establishment itself is realizing they are in a dilemma. What Paul Kennedy and others like him are focusing on, all has to do with the decline of empires: the decline of the economic base, when there are still vast military arsenals. It is a matter of being overstretched, an overstretched empire. The U.S. can't afford it. How can they come out of it? That was a major theme at the conference."

Indeed, these statements were no different than the recent discussions at the April 9-11 Trilateral Commission meeting in Tokyo.

## The Soviets drop in

One special feature of the Sheffield meeting was the appearance of Soviet influential Viktor Borichuk, of Georgii Arbatov's U.S.A.-Canada Institute in Moscow. Borichuk had not been invited, but "suddenly appeared," stated one conference participant. "It was wonderful having him there, he was very sharp and very interesting."

The Soviets, of course, have their own game when it comes to the era of American decline and "superpower condominium" maneuvers. While offering "regional cooperation" and "crisis management" schemes to the United States, they intend to exploit the Americans' troubles, and to use groups such as those at Sheffield as part of their "irregular warfare" forces in the West.

One Sheffield participant stated privately, "Even if there are aspects of Soviet behavior that we can't support, and even if Gorbachov is negotiating deals with the U.S. imperialists, we look at Soviet political culture since 1917, and conclude that it is relatively progressive structurally and globally."

## From around the world

The Sheffield conference was formally sponsored by the Department of Sociological Studies of the University of Sheffield, and was co-sponsored by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, *Monthly Review* magazine, and six or eight other groups.

International speakers included Sweezy and Harry Magdoff, both of *Monthly Review*; aging British-Pakistani rabble-rouser Tariq Ali; and representatives from the Philippines, South Africa, Nicaragua, Lebanon, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Palau, Vietnam, and elsewhere.