
Conference Report

Is the Trilateral Commission becoming an extinct species?

by Scott Thompson

At the close of this year's Trilateral Commission meeting on March 13-15 in Washington, D.C., there were significant signs that the Commission, which had already been on the Endangered Species List as a Cold War institution, was on its way to extinction. For the first time, no concluding press release was issued by the chairmen of the Trilateral Commission on the "consensus" reached at the meeting, nor did the chairmen answer journalists' questions about policy decisions. The Trilateral Commission was originally founded by David Rockefeller as a supranational institution making policy for the global financier oligarchy, with representatives from North America, Europe, and Japan. Its executive committee has included the likes of Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Lawrence Eagleburger, and Britain's Lord Carrington.

This year, reporters were ushered in at the close of the final plenary session, so that there could be no question and answer period with the press. But the remarks of the three chairmen—North American Chairman Paul A. Volcker, European Chairman Otto Graf Lambsdorf, and Japanese Chairman Yotaro Kobayashi—showed that there had been a good deal of contention at the closed sessions:

Otto Graf Lambsdorf, who is honorary chairman of the Free Democratic Party in Germany, declared that this session of the Trilateral Commission had "left more questions than answers."

Yotaro Kobayashi, who is chairman and chief executive officer of Fuji Xerox Co., Ltd. and a member of the board of directors of Xerox Corp. and of ABB Asea Brown Boveri Ltd., let slip that there was a need for "qualitative and quantitative improvement" in his nation's economy. However, he stated that a Special Group on East Asia which will prepare the main document for next year's meeting in Japan had gotten off to a promising start. "Perhaps at next year's meeting we will develop a longer-term strategy for the 21st century," Kobayashi concluded.

Paul A. Volcker, who had been chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve System during the Carter years, then chairman of the investment firm of Wolfensohn & Co., and now a

professor emeritus at Princeton, affirmed that there had been "a lot of cynicism about the U.S. government" expressed at the meeting. After rattling off the names of certain U.S. speakers, Volcker added: "Several people have questioned whether or not the U.S. is up to its role. I believe that these speakers demonstrate that there are some U.S. government officials and Congressmen who are up to international affairs."

The title of the main report discussed at the meeting, "21st Century Strategies of the Trilateral Countries: In Concert or Conflict," reflected the growing tensions among the Trilaterals. Following traditional Trilateral Commission practice, the main discussion draft report had been written by three people, one from each of the Trilateral regions, but it seemed as if this year the *rapporteurs* had not even talked with one another while drafting the report, let alone sought to present a coherent strategy for binding the Trilateral regions together in the 21st century.

This and other indicators seemed to show that there was more "conflict" than "concert," both in the report and the meeting's proceedings.

The three authors of the report who gave concluding remarks to the Commission at the last plenary on March 15, are the following:

Robert B. Zoellick, who is now president and CEO of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University in Washington, having served in the Bush administration as Undersecretary of State for Economics and Counselor to the State Department before becoming Deputy White House Chief of Staff;

Hisashi Owada, who had been Japanese Ambassador to the UN from 1994-98 and is now president of the Japan Institute of International Affairs; and,

Peter Sutherland, who is currently chairman and managing director of Goldman Sachs International and co-chairman of British Petroleum-Amoco in London.

One obvious concern within the Trilateral Commission was what Hisashi Owada referred to as the "global unilateralism" displayed by the United States in the post-Cold War world. And, Peter Sutherland presented a recent quote from

Sir Henry Kissinger, in which this self-confessed British agent stated, "For the U.S. to stand alone as the sole imperial power is not healthy."

Other areas where conflict among Trilateralists at the meeting was displayed include:

1. Whether NATO should expand or even continue to exist under U.S. domination, given increasing hostility from Europeans at American "out-of-area" deployments, the push by an Anglo-American faction for "NATO enlargement," and the desire of Europeans to have their own security system.

2. How to approach what Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. has called "The Survivors' Club" of Russia, China, and India, which has emerged with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the systemic collapse of the globalized economy. (See *Documentation* on Zoellick's containment policy.)

3. Whether "Euroland," which the United States had encouraged during the Bush administration, was really such a great idea, given that the value of the euro has been dropping since its introduction in January 1999; that Social Democratic governments desire to undertake deficit spending to supply more jobs and a better social safety net; and, the still burning question of whether European nations have given up too much sovereignty to a central bureaucracy—a bureaucracy which collapsed with the resignation of European Commission President Jacques Santer and 19 commissioners on the eve of the Trilateral Commission meeting.

4. As Hisashi Owada admitted, another source of conflict was that Japan had been in a decade-long economic collapse, from which, he optimistically forecast (having presented no real solution), it might take a decade more to recover.

It may be because of the wide array of disagreements on a common strategy, that several key Trilats were absent on the final day of the conference. These included the Hollinger Corp.'s Conrad Black, former Trilateral Executive Director and Carter National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Commission Founder and Honorary Chairman David Rockefeller. As the tell-tale failure of the Trilateral Commission chairmen not only to issue a final press release, let alone face an inquiring press, suggests, there was no agreement reached on these "conflict" areas within the meeting itself.

The unspoken question

Perhaps what was most glaringly absent in the discussion, to judge from the Commission's draft report as well as remarks by Trilat members, was any substantive airing of what steps would be necessary to solve a systemic, global economic collapse. Not only was there no evident discussion of LaRouche's call for a New Bretton Woods System, or of global infrastructure programs such as his Eurasian Land-Bridge grand design, but the Trilateraloids called in to speak on a tenuous "new architecture" were the very individuals and institutions partially responsible for the systemic economic collapse.

Among the panels dealing at a distance with this prob-

lem were:

1. An address on March 13 by Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Lawrence H. Summers on "The Trilateral Countries and the Global Economy";

2. A plenary session the same day on "Trilateral Economies in a Turbulent Global Economy," where the speakers included AFL-CIO President John Sweeney on "Workers' Issues"; Yotaro Kobayashi on "Revitalizing the Japanese Economy"; and Edmond Alphandery, former French Minister of the Economy and Finances. The latter presented an Alice-in-Wonderland address entitled, "The Euro as the Catalyst for Economic Reform," which maintained that the already collapsing euro would become a rival reserve currency to the dollar and would help catalyze the European Union into becoming a superpower partner of the United States.

3. On March 14, there was a plenary session on "Brazil and Argentina," which are collapsing just as had the "Asian Tigers" last year under the assault of mega-speculators such as George Soros. The plenum was addressed by Andre Lara Resende, former Special Adviser to the President of Brazil, and Domingo Cavallo, former Economy Minister of Argentina. No evident solution to the economic devastation that has been taking place in Ibero-America for almost 20 years was broached, except for more of the same International Monetary Fund (IMF) recipe for austerity, budget-cutting, and dismantling of the physical economy.

4. On the same day, Andrei Kokoshin, vice president of the Russian Academy of Sciences and former First Minister of Defense and Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, gave an address, whose content is unknown. Kokoshin had been among those neo-liberal, free-market reformers, whom President Boris Yeltsin fired following Russia's default on its usurious GKO bonds last August, to install the government of Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov, who has been following a "national economic strategy" that involves joining in the "Survivors' Club" with China and India.

5. On the morning of March 15, the hyenas of international finance appeared. Prince Philip's cohort in genocide, Sir James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank, spoke on "the wider social and economic challenge." And, in a delphic play on Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin's call for "a new financial architecture," Stanley Fischer, first deputy managing director of the IMF, spoke about "Improving the Architecture of the International Financial System," although his institution had been responsible for finishing the economic devastation of most "Asian Tigers," Russia, Brazil, and other nations, following their having been devoured by hedge-fund operators like George Soros.

Clearly, in the fundamental domain of reaching a physical economic solution to the systemic economic collapse, the Trilateraloids were prepared to throw yet more countries into a New Dark Age from which no IMF/World Bank "recovery" policy would save them.

A fig leaf called 'rule of law'

Another area where the Trilats were more direct, despite disagreements, was military and security policy. In his discussion paper on "The United States," Bush Leaguer Robert Zoellick raised a fig leaf that the United States had been the original instigator of much of international law, but that a pragmatic response to circumstances of late had frequently kept Washington from exercising the very "rule of law" that it had helped bring into being.

Zoellick, while calling for containment of China, Russia, and India on the Eurasian continent, in apparent response to the growing union of these nations within the Survivors' Club, said that U.S. strategy had three other objectives: 1) "The United States needs to overhaul the ties with its two primary overseas partners, western Europe and Japan, to better meet a new generation of challenges"; 2) "North America, the European Union, and Japan need to reach out to the next group of potential partners in this political community," especially those nations "that are building open markets, creating middle classes, and developing representative democracies" in Central and eastern Europe, Ibero-America, and East Asia; and, 3) "The United States and the other Trilateral countries need to link these regions together within a global economic system of finance, trade, and information."

While calling for no further NATO enlargement, Zoellick presented the utopian post-Cold War vision of the enemy being so-called rogue states that have "increased access to weapons of mass destruction—especially biological and nuclear arms," which "is enabling hostile parties to raise the catastrophic stakes of conflict." He called for "an integrated theater and national system of missile defense," referring to the antiquated off-the-shelf system now being advocated by such Principals Committee members of the Clinton administration as Secretary of Defense William Cohen, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Henry H. Shelton. Zoellick called upon Europeans to join in building "missile defense systems that share technology, costs, and operational missions."

Zoellick also called for the "dispersion of forces (instead of the traditional massing of forces)" that would "maximize firepower at a point in space and time" through the use of "information technology."

In the domain of security policy, Peter Sutherland, who elsewhere admitted that there was growing hostility to the treaties that had created the European Union, to the degree that the EU might disintegrate overnight, raised the question of how Europe could integrate the Western European Union defense pact with NATO. According to Sutherland, the solution would be to establish a High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) under the EU guidelines:

"The institutional framework of the new CFSP will be

completed in June, when the Council of Ministers will appoint the first High Representative for the CFSP and an early warning and planning unit will be set up to provide independent logistic support. Although it remains to be seen whether the High Representative will be able to exercise any real clout, rather than play a mere coordinating role, the personification of the CFSP can at least be expected to provide some operational advantages (partially answering Henry Kissinger's famous question of 'who do I call to speak to Europe?'). Certainly, it is a role that the public actually appear to want. The first High Representative for the CFSP will however have the unenviable task of trying to form policy with a group that has trouble coming to a consensus over security issues."

Utopian East Asian expansion

Bearing in mind that the Trilateral Commission was formed as a Cold War institution, which avoided seeking partnership with Russia and China, which it sought to contain, it is notable that Hisashi Owada wrote a proposal for expanding the Trilateral Commission to include an East Asian bloc. In his essay, "Trilateralism Revisited: The Need for Shared Responsibility," he writes that the world has become a *pax consortis* among nations that share the same "common values"—including "freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights."

"A totally different consideration should apply to the case of East Asia as a region relevant to trilateralism," Owada continues. "Many countries in this region now possess a remarkable degree of identity of interests with the countries of the trilateral regions in terms of their political structure based on the democratic principles of their government, their economic structure based on the free-market principles and their social structure based on the principles of the rule of law and of the respect for human rights."

"During the past 20 years, the region of East Asia has completely changed its face. What we are witnessing now is the emergence of this region as a homogeneous group of partners that include Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, as well as Taiwan and Hong Kong, all possessing many of the common characteristics with the trilateral regions in terms of their political, economic and social structures, and essentially sharing the common values that trilateralism is trying to pursue. . . . There should be no reason why East Asia as a region, parallel with the region of North America and the region of Europe both West and East, should not claim a place in the Trilateral Commission as one of the three partners in the triad. It is gratifying to note that there is already some movement in this direction."

Of course, what is glaringly missing from this schema is China, the world's most populous nation, which would be left out of the expanded Trilateral Commission, while

Hong Kong and Taiwan might be included. It seems that this expansion of the Trilateral Commission for the year 2000 meeting in Japan, may be one of the topics that were discussed during the recent Commission meeting, by the newly formed East Asia group, which included people from almost every country except mainland China. This proposal for expanding the Trilateral Commission is predicated upon the systemic economic collapse having not made the group altogether extinct by 2000.

Documentation

Zoellick seeks containment of Russia, China, India

Bush Leaguer Robert B. Zoellick, the president and chief executive officer of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., wrote the U.S. section of the draft report for the March 13-15 Trilateral Commission meeting, entitled "21st Century Strategies of the Trilateral Countries: In Concert or Conflict?" Rather than call for a joining of the Trilateral countries with the "Survivors' Club" emerging through the integration of China, Russia, and India, Zoellick clearly sees the Club as a potential security threat that must be contained for the time being at least.

The following are excerpts from his essay:

"Ongoing, healthy U.S. partnerships with Europe and Japan will go a long way toward ensuring security in two regions—the trans-Atlantic area and the Asia-Pacific—where instability has bred threats to the United States. These partnerships will also enhance the ability of the Trilateral countries to address the uncertainties of China's and Russia's futures. . . .

"At the edges of this democratic community [the Trilateral countries—ed.] are the three great challenges of Eurasia—China, Russia, and India—each in the midst of a massive transformation. China and Russia are experiencing staggering internal turmoil while they are also trying to redefine their place in the world. Our aim should be to offer a path to integrate China and Russia peacefully into this community if we can, while being prepared to shield against them if we cannot. . . .

"The Trilateral countries must still cope with Russia, Ukraine, and other states of the former Soviet Union. For the foreseeable future, the security problems these countries pose will stem from their weakness, not their strength. In-

deed, the political, economic, and social breakdowns in Russia are most dangerous because they increase the risk of hostile parties obtaining weapons of mass destruction. . . .

"The rise of China looms over the rest of Asia. Although China still faces staggering internal problems, there is no doubt that its influence in Asia is on the rise. The priority of China's leadership is economic development, an understandable choice. But it is troubling that China has not accepted the idea that an ongoing U.S. presence in East Asia assures the region's security. It appears that China would prefer a future where it could cooperate with Korea, exercise pre-eminent influence in Southeast Asia, and keep Japan in check. China's insensitivity to democratic hopes—whether in Taiwan or on the part of a few activists on the mainland—is also not encouraging.

"China's leaders have demonstrated, however, pragmatism about security questions—at least at this stage in China's evolution. If the United States, Japan, and South Korea demonstrate a resolve to perpetuate the current structure of East Asian security, I believe China will accept that reality. . . .

"Japan and the United States should be developing a more balanced security and military partnership. The revised U.S.-Japan defense guidelines, once implemented, will better prepare the two countries to cope with a military crisis. But this should be just the starting point for a strategy to move Japan towards a greater supporting role. Japan and the United States should start to align their militaries much more closely—through shared intelligence, doctrine, weaponry, use of information technology, operational planning, training and combined exercises. This military integration would lessen the likelihood that any external shock—in Korea, China or elsewhere—might precipitate a shift in Japan's security strategy. . . .

"Deeper U.S. security ties with Japan should be accompanied by the development of a U.S.-Japanese-South Korean alliance. . . .

"China would not welcome these developments. It will fear the interference of the United States and Japan with Taiwan. It would prefer a fluidity in Asian security arrangements which it might manipulate. Yet it is not in our interest to leave openings for Chinese mischief, or worse. Rather, we should combine a firm security posture with opportunities for China to deepen its economic and political cooperation with the region and the world. . . .

"The security of the community still depends largely on the United States. In 10 to 15 years, however, we could achieve a complementary European partner as part of NATO and supporting Pacific partners, including Japan, South Korea, Australia, and perhaps others. The next steps would be to draw together the trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific security partners and to provide an opportunity for serious security cooperation with China, Russia, and India."