



## TRIBUTES TO HENRY D. OWEN (1920-2011)

### Georges Berthoin

Henry was a true friend. We worked together a long time ago, when Americans and Europeans were building the future within an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. This was made possible thanks to people with devotion and values. At their forefront, Henry embodied what was the most attractive, inspiring and sincere in the American dream, the fight against dictatorship and fear. As a generation, we are reaching the end of the road one by one.

It is important for those young people who are now in charge, family and colleagues, to understand that Henry was, after the cataclysmic collapse of WW II, a key player who made the world a better place. To be faithful to his life's accomplishment, the human inheritance he is leaving must be known, cherished but also strengthened against the new demands and uncertainties of an interdependent world. It was a great privilege to share work and friendship with such a great American.

**Georges Berthoin** was Chairman of the Trilateral Commission's European Group from 1976 to 1992 and is now European Honorary Chairman of the Trilateral Commission

### Charles Heck

Henry Owen, who passed away earlier this month (November 2011), was a key American in the conceptualization, creation and early work of the Trilateral Commission – and an unassuming, constructive, fine human being.

More than one year of consultations preceded the launch of the Trilateral Commission in mid-1973. While Zbigniew Brzezinski, the founding Director of the Commission, was the central intellectual dynamo in this process, Henry Owen was a key collaborator. In the framework of the Foreign Policy Studies program at the Brookings Institution, of which he had been Director since 1969, Owen had already experimented with task force projects bringing together influential experts from Europe, North America and Japan – a model important for the task force work undertaken in the framework of the new Commission. Owen himself was the North American author (alongside a European and a Japanese) of the “political task force” report discussed at the first Trilateral Commission meeting – in Tokyo in October 1973. Entitled *The Crisis of International Cooperation*, this report articulated basic thinking behind Trilateral's creation. A good one-sentence statement of that basic thinking opens this report's summary: “Growing interdependence and the inadequacy of present forms of international cooperation are the principal features of the contemporary international order.”

Henry Owen was also the North American author of a second early task force report, one that indicates the Commission was not a hardline Cold War organization. Germinated in late 1974, this project led to the draft report (discussed at the January 1977 plenary meeting in Tokyo) entitled *Collaboration with Communist Countries in Managing Global Problems: An Examination of the Options*. The first sentence of the summary of this report communicates its essence: “Constructive cooperation with Communist countries in a number of areas of global concern could make a significant contribution to solutions of the substantive problems involved without causing undue risks or intrusion in the internal affairs of participating countries.” In a style typical of Henry Owen, and probably helpful in his briefing of government leaders, this report moved quickly through the necessary abstractions and devoted itself to specific, practical discussion of nine areas for collaboration.

Enhanced cooperation among Europe, North America and Japan on global challenges was of more than academic interest for Owen. In early 1977 he went on leave from Brookings and joined the Carter Administration to coordinate U.S. preparations for the upcoming intergovernmental summit in London of key Trilateral countries; and he continued to distinguish himself as the U.S. “sherpa” for succeeding G-7 summits throughout the Carter years. Trilateral Commission meetings and publications in these years were enriched by his reflections on this G-7 summit work.

After the Carter Administration, Henry Owen returned to membership in the Trilateral Commission and served for many years on the North American planning group – always constructive, always unassuming, always with humanity.

**Charles Heck** joined the Trilateral Commission staff in July 1974 and served as North American Director from 1982 to 2001.