

PAUL SWEEZY MARXIST ECONOMIST AND PUBLISHER, DIES

By Louis Uchitelle

Paul M. Sweezy, a Harvard University economist who left academia and became the nation's leading Marxist intellectual and publisher during the cold war and the McCarthy era, died Saturday (March 6, 2004) at his home in Larchmont, N.Y. He was 93. The cause was congestive heart failure, his daughter, Lybess Sweezy, said. Mr. Sweezy did not think of himself as a Stalinist or sectarian. His Marxism developed as a response to the Great Depression, and his mentor was a famed conservative economist, Joseph Schumpeter, who counted on spirited entrepreneurs to lift the economy through a process of destruction and rebuilding. While Schumpeter wanted less government, Mr. Sweezy wanted more to offset what he considered capitalism's failings. Still, the two men worked together at Harvard in the late 1930's and early 1940's. Schumpeter cited his young friend in several of his own works and endorsed Mr. Sweezy for a tenured professorship at Harvard, even campaigning on his behalf. The slot went to a non-Marxist, and Mr. Sweezy soon left academia.

Because of an inheritance from his father, a banker, he had enough money to support himself. Mr. Sweezy later told friends that if he had been forced to work for a living, he might have been more of a conformist. Instead, in 1949 he became co-founder and co-editor of *The Monthly Review*, an independent Marxist journal published in Manhattan that he continued to edit and contribute to until well into the 1990's. The magazine still appears, although its monthly circulation has fallen to 7,000, from 12,000 at its peak in the 1970's. For the first issue, Albert Einstein contributed an article titled "Why Socialism?" and over the years the bylines included such famous radicals or Marxists as W. E. B. Du Bois, Jean-Paul Sartre, Che Guevara and Joan Robinson.

"The *Monthly Review* was attractive to people who were leaving the Communist Party and other sectarian groups," said John Bellamy Foster, a co-editor of the publication now. "It was and is Marxist, but did not hew to the party line or get into sectarian struggles." That reflected Mr. Sweezy's approach in the 100 articles or so that he wrote over the years and the more than 20 books he signed as author, co-author or editor. The most famous was "Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order" (Monthly Review Press, 1966), with Paul A. Baran as co-author. That book argued that unregulated market economies have a tendency to stagnate and to develop oligopolies in which a few companies dominate each industry and keep pushing up prices, fattening profits for the oligopolies but damping economic activity because of a lack of price competition. What saved the United States from that fate in the 1960's, the authors wrote, were temporary phenomenon: military spending, robust consumerism and the growing demand for autos because of rapidly expanding suburbs and the new Interstate highway system.

Paul Marlor Sweezy was born on April 10, 1910, the youngest of three sons of Everett P. Sweezy, vice president of First National Bank of New York, and Caroline Wilson Sweezy. He earned a bachelor's degree from Harvard in 1931 and his Ph.D. in 1937. By then he was a

Marxist, having taken that step during a year at the London School of Economics. "I became convinced," he wrote much later, "that mainstream economics of the kind I had been taught at Harvard had little to contribute toward understanding the major events and trends of the 20th century." Still, back at Harvard, as a graduate student and then an instructor, he came in contact with Schumpeter and a friendship flourished, although they supported different solutions for ending the Depression. For Schumpeter, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal measures suppressed entrepreneurs in their normal process of creative destruction and innovation.

For Mr. Sweezy, who borrowed from Keynesian theory as well as Marxism, government planning and intervention had a role, although working people also had to intervene. Listening to their debates, Paul Samuelson, the Nobel laureate, spoke of Schumpeter as "the foxy Merlin" and Mr. Sweezy as the "young Sir Galahad" who early on "established himself as among the most promising economists of his generation."

During World War II, Mr. Sweezy spent four years in the Army as an officer in the Office of Strategic Services. After returning briefly to Harvard as a teacher and having failed to gain a tenured position, he left in 1946 to pursue the goal of establishing "a serious and authentic American brand of Marxism." The pursuit was not easy in the McCarthy era. He found himself in the courts in the 1950's after he refused to turn over to the attorney general of New Hampshire his notes from a lecture at the University of New Hampshire. The attorney general accused him of subversive activities and the case eventually went to the United States Supreme Court, which ruled in Mr. Sweezy's favor. Mr. Sweezy's first wife, Nancy, and his second wife, Zirel, survive, as do three children, Samuel, Lybess and Martha; two stepchildren, Jeffrey and Jennifer Dowd; seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.