

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

What did Brandt tell Castañeda?

The Mexican official's trip raises a question of whether Mexico can be duped into supporting the zero-growth program of a certain agent of the World Bank.

Mexican Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda made a hushed visit to Austria this week to meet with Willy Brandt and Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky. The public notice of the trip was buried in the back pages of the Mexican newspapers and no official statements from the trip ever appeared.

Yet the agenda included the recent Brandt Commission report for restructuring the world economy, particularly North-South relations, as a central item. Observers are wondering if Castañeda's flirting with the Commission and the United Nations/World Bank "one-world mafia" behind it may not in fact be linked to the insistent rumors that Castañeda may be dumped from his post.

The issue in a nutshell is this: Will Mexico join the Brandt Commission drive for channeling the Third World's demands for a "new world economic order" back into the IMF/World Bank structure? The Brandt idea is to peddle a "restructuring" which achieves the same result as the current IMF conditionality policies, but under more politically saleable rubrics of "appropriate technologies" and "self-sufficiency."

While Castañeda was abroad, there was a related meeting April 17-19 of a "Latin American Forum" at Luis Echeverria's Third World Center—the CEESTEM—located here in Mexico City. This was the first of a series of meetings

organized jointly by CEESTEM and the United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR), who are coordinating international discussions on the theme of how to create a "New Regional Economic Order" Castañeda has worked closely with UNITAR director Ervin Laszlo on this project, as has CEESTEM director Jorge Alberto Lozoya.

From the first the Brandt Commission pitch was unabashed. Gabriel Valdez, a top U.N. official and a protégé of Chilean Brandt Commissioner Eduardo Frei, did the honors with an impassioned plea for help for Jamaica now that Jamaica has repudiated negotiations with the IMF. The "Jamaica case" is the tactical focus for all of Brandt Commission organizing in Latin America at this time.

Valdez then placed this Brandt-styled appeal in the context of greater regional self-sufficiency, fully bearing out the forum's subtitle of "a new regional economic order" as the replacement for "new world order." Faced with world economic disarray, Latin America must "form a bloc" to overcome the problems of "19th century nationalisms," he declared. As the foundation for this regionalization, he proposed the immediate establishment of supranational Latin American institutions in the areas of energy and food.

Several participants, including representatives of the Mexican

government, noted the striking similarity of such an approach with the "Western Hemisphere Strategic Reserve" program masterminded by Hudson Institute-trained energy consultant Robert Panero.

Less well known is the striking similarity of the CEESTEM meeting to the goals of a just-formed secretive hemispheric task force of the Aspen Institute, the Club of Rome's sister organization in the U.S. The Aspen target: restructuring of the entirety of hemispheric-wide institutions for full supranational government.

Why the Brandt Commission focus on Mexico? Because no hemispheric or regional plan can work without Mexico's involvement. In the past, Mexico has led opposition to regional "self-sufficiency," in all guises, from the North American Common Market idea to Venezuela's efforts to set up twotiered oil pricing with special cut-rates for Third World clients. Many people here still remember that when Castañeda implied Mexican support for two-tiered pricing one morning early last November, he was forced to call a special press conference that same afternoon to say it was all an error due to poor copyediting of the speech.

But excitement here in Mexico is now building for President Lopez Portillo's mid-May tour of Europe when his talks with France's Giscard and West Germany's Schmidt will reinforce the traditional Mexican insistence on full sovereignty and global solutions.

Significantly, neither Jorge Alberto Lozoya nor Gabriel Valdez, at the CEESTEM Forum, had a single word to say on the President's upcoming trip.