Bush's looting market re-offered to Mexico

by D.E. Pettingell

Vice President George Bush, in his first major foreign policy speech as the undisputed Republican Party presidential candidate, revived the ghost of a North American Common Market between the United States, Canada and Mexico. He told the American Society of Newspaper Editors April 15, "As President, I will work toward creation of a free trade zone embracing Mexico, Canada, and the United States."

With the signing of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement in early 1988, plans to incorporate Mexico into the agreement and turn it into the framework of the North American Common Market have moved forward. This same policy was rejected by then-Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo in 1980 as a scheme to force Mexico to eliminate all trade barriers, opening up the country's strategic resources to be looted by the United States and Canada. Opposition to the scheme inside Mexico has since become weaker.

Bush expressed his optimism on achieving such a goal under the next Mexican administration, presumably to be headed by the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)'s presidential candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the former planning and budget minister instrumental in incorporating Mexico into the free-trade looting scheme called the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Bush told the American editors that he looks forward to meeting Salinas and revealed, to the surprise of many in Mexico, "My staff already met with representatives of Mr. Salinas. . . . I am impressed by his economic agenda, with his theme of the 'Modernization of Mexico.' "

This magazine learned that there have been two unpublicized meetings between the Bush and Salinas camps, one in February and one in April, both of which took place in the Vice President's White House Office. Bush was represented by his top national security adviser, Donald Gregg, and Deputy Assistant to the Vice President Sam Watson. It is not known whom Salinas sent to speak on his behalf, but the vice president's office characterized the meetings as "constructive, amiable, and positive." Top on the agenda was the Common Market idea.

Perhaps the next time Salinas's people come to Washington to see Gregg, they might have to visit him in jail. Gregg is deeply embroiled in the Iran-Contra scandal as the man who knew about Oliver North's illegal resupply operation. He is also one of the targets of a Senate probe looking into the Contras' cocaine connections.

According to some sources, Salinas's representatives also met with Dr. Norman Bailey, Bush's top campaign adviser for international economic affairs. Bailey, a former official at the National Security Council during the first years of the Reagan administration, is the gray eminence behind the U.S. economic war against Panama. In his 1987 book, *The Mexican Time Bomb,* Bailey stops short of proposing the Common Market scheme when he demands a "halt to any further protectionist measures." Bailey writes: "Measures to . . . liberalize trade practices . . . cut back overregulation and bureaucratic interference, should be adopted as quickly as politically and socially feasible. Without such measures Mexico will continue to face economic and political turmoil."

A Common Market blueprint

The blue-blood Institute for International Economics is the Washington-based think tank currently leading the academic studies on the Common Market. In the middle of April, the Institute and the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations released their "Bilateralism, Multilateralism, and Canada in U.S. Trade Policy," where five "experts" from the United States, Canada, and Mexico "examine" the impact that the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement will have on the trade relations of the three countries.

The book includes the chapter, a "Mexican Viewpoint," by Gerardo M. Bueno, a senior fellow at Colegio de México, a nest of foreign-trained "intellectuals" closely associated with Salinas de Gortari. Bueno became an embarrassment for Mexico when his candidacy for president of the Latin American Economic System (SELA) was rejected by most Ibero-American nations because he was too closely identified with the International Monetary Fund's austerity policies.

Old wine in new bottles

The idea of a North American Common Market is an old scheme pushed by one administration after another. In announcing his candidacy in New York, in November 1979, Ronald Reagan made the North American "accord" a centerpiece of his speech. The Common Market idea was credited to Richard Allen, then Reagan's top foreign policy adviser and later Reagan's first National Security Adviser. Allen was instrumental in selling the Reagan/Bush administration the secret government's Project Democracy foreign policy agenda that led to the Iran-Contra scandal.

In a North American trade association, Mexico would be the weakest partner. Mexico would offer oil and cheap, abundant labor and would get in return a dumping of consumer goods that would eliminate once and for all Mexico's small and medium-sized industries. The multinationals would continue invading Mexico's northern states, opening up many more assembly plants (*maquiladoras*). The Eastern Establishment's dream to impose the Taiwan-Shanghai-Hong Kong model upon Mexico would come true.