

OUR VOICE

***D**rug trafficking gravely distorts economies, public health and the security of all the countries it touches. And because it is a problem we share, we should also share the solutions. Therefore, bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for fighting it must be set up that also respect each country's national sovereignty and take into account the complexity of the task at hand in proposing concrete strategies. Using in-depth studies, agreements must be reached that clearly define each country's functions and responsibilities, for example, in terms of financing, technology and policy design.*

Unfortunately, the United States government has opted for a unilateral policy in the fight against drug trafficking: certification. This does not take into account the needs or problems confronted by the countries it classifies as producers; above all, it is based on the false premise that the problem is almost exclusively these countries' responsibility. This policy has had a negative impact on U.S. relations with Latin America, especially with Mexico. But, in addition, its effectiveness is dubious. Certification's actual results are unsubstantial. Drug trafficking has not only not abated, but it has increased despite the producing countries' impressive efforts to fight it.

In an exclusive article for Voices of Mexico, Ambassador Jorge Montaña looks at the reasons for certification and questions its effectiveness. He shows the uselessness of a strategy based exclusively on combating drug production and distribution while not including serious, well funded programs for halting consumption. He also goes into the fallacies in the arguments used in the U.S. Congress for justifying its unilateral actions. Among others, he points to the facts that 1) production and distribution channels go beyond Latin America, and 2) the United States is also a producer and distributor, with powerful drug cartels operating inside its borders. If some states of the United States were measured with the same yardstick as Latin America, they would probably not rate certification because they are important centers for marijuana production and distribution.

Drug czar Brian McCaffrey's recent visit to Mexico's northern border may be an indicator of a change in the U.S. outlook. The intense work being carried out by the high-level bilateral teams of experts and officials is also encouraging. However, the only fair, productive position would be for all the countries involved to come together to develop a multilateral strategy. This would presuppose the elimination of the certification procedure and the creation of an international plan for fighting drugs, probably directed by UN or OAS officials.

Mexico's federal elections last July 6 signaled a radical transformation in the way politics are done in this country. For the first time in more than a century, the nation must envisage and create institutions for decision-making in a context in which the president's political party will not have an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies. Germán Pérez Fernández del Castillo analyzes the consequences of this transcendental change, describing the scenarios the country may face, emphasizing particularly the threat to governability and economic stability that vengeful or exaggerated attitudes on the part of the opposition in exercising its new-found power could mean. The "Politics" section also provides our readership with an overview of the July 6 electoral results, with the aim of familiarizing the English-speaking public with the new situation and bringing to its attention the implications and possible consequences, centering on the issues on the immediate political agenda to be thrashed out in the new, really pluralistic situation.

While Mexico's relations with the United States have been contentious around issues like drug trafficking, other areas like culture have been the backdrop for exceptional institutional and private efforts to foster the two countries' coming closer together. In "Science, Art and Culture," Ilán Semo's contribution explains how, when institutions are both willing and interested—in this case, Mexico's Bancomer Cultural Foundation and National Fund for Culture and the Arts, and the Rockefeller Foundation—they can create a productive bilateral relationship. These three institutions' five years of work in the U.S.-Mexico Fund for Culture have resulted in an impressive number of art works and cultural events that build bridges of understanding between two countries united by history and geography.

The section continues with an original article by Jesús Villanueva which relates the life and work of an exceptional Mexican woman, Doña Luz. Model and inspiration to painters because of her indigenous beauty as well as language and cultural interpreter for outstanding U.S. anthropologists and scholars interested in Mexico, Doña Luz was recently honored by an important Texas museum with a well deserved homage.

Two important Mexican art critics, Alberto Ruy Sánchez and Luis Porter, present in this issue articles about the work of painter Arnaldo Coen. Coen's work has made him one of the most outstanding exponents of Mexican abstract expressionism. His command of the balance between abstraction and figurative painting, together with his mastery in working with geometric figures, particularly cubes, are perhaps his main contribution to universal art.

"The Splendor of Mexico" includes an article by Luis Roberto Torres Escalona about our wonderful University City campus. The profusion of its art works, which include the best of Mexican monumental sculpture, architecture and muralism make this one of the capital city's most important cultural sites.

The International Cervantes Festival held annually in Guanajuato is one of Mexico's most important artistic and cultural events, not only because of the quality of its performances, but also because it takes place in one of our most beautiful colonial cities. Voices of Mexico offers its readers a photo story about the festival's main venues, examples of some of our country's best colonial architecture.

Architect Francisco Pérez de Salazar takes our readers into the world of tinacales, or fermenting sheds, ritual places on old Mexican haciendas used to produce pulque, a popular alcoholic beverage drunk both daily and on special occasions. Although unfortunately the tradition is on the wane, the murals on the shed walls turned them into repositories of some of Mexico's best folk art.

This year marks the 150 anniversary of the 1847 war between Mexico and the United States. Historian Jesús Velasco Márquez offers us an article about the viewpoint of the Mexican participants in that historical conflict, a "vision of the vanquished" noteworthy for its rigorous analysis and documentary research.

Relations between the United States and Cuba have never been easy. "United States Affairs" presents an article by Santiago Pérez Benítez looking at the pragmatic reasons behind recent U.S. administrations' positions toward Cuba, in the framework of a cost-benefit analysis for policy design.

"Canadian Issues" takes up the topic of Canada's recent elections. Julián Castro Rea shows how, despite the Liberal Party's victory, it has lost hegemony and ground vis-à-vis other political forces, particularly with regard to the degree and impact of the new distribution of regional power in the country. Elisa Dávalos writes an article about inter-provincial trade in Canada where, paradoxically, only very recently did internal trade barriers begin to come down, in total contrast to its foreign policy which led it to sign NAFTA. Lastly, we include an article by Graciela Martínez Zalce about Canada's Cirque du Soleil, more than just a circus, a cultural expression that enters the realm of corporeal plasticity and the music of movement.

The "Museums" section invites our readers to a unique experience, a visit to The Quixote Iconographic Museum in the colonial city of Guanajuato. This museum is the only one in the world with more than 600 versions of Cervantes' immortal character, done in painting, sculpture, engravings and crafts, from the world over.

Edelmira Linares and Robert Bye delight us once again with their vast knowledge of Mexico's plants in a short but interesting article about their ceremonial uses.

*Undoubtedly, Angeles Mastretta is one of the most important writers not only in Mexico, but in the Spanish-speaking world as a whole. We are happy to be able to include here a short story from her book *Mujeres de ojos grandes* (Large-Eyed Women).*

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to inform Voices of Mexico readers that this will be the last issue for which I will act as editorial director. The more than two years in which I was honored to have the opportunity to edit the magazine have been one of the most important challenges and joys of my professional life. I leave the magazine satisfied that I have put the best of my abilities into getting across in English my country's most important issues and voices. Happy to know that I will be close to Voices in my new post as director of the UNAM Center for Research on North America, I am sure that the dedication and professionalism of the staff remaining at the magazine will ensure it a successful future.

Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla
Editorial Director