

OUR VOICE

Mexico is heavyhearted. It has lost one of its most beloved and lucid voices. The vacuum can already be felt in the international literary community and will undoubtedly be difficult to fill. Mexican literature is wonderfully represented in the extensive works of Octavio Paz. Some voices are silenced and leave no echo, but the voice of Paz defines us, marks us, guides us, resonates within us. Unchallenged in literature, he was always controversial in political milieus, but even his opponents had to recognize his critical vocation, essentially honest and visionary. Somehow, even they had been marked by it.

With Paz, you are grateful to read a line of poetry. You stop, you read it again aloud, and slowly it touches the spirit. I am personally grateful to have had the opportunity of sharing a moment with Paz, at an unforgettable gathering where he read poetry to a small group, talked about which of the Machado, Manuel or Antonio, was a better poet, told fascinating stories about his youth and, in general, showed the exceptional ability to deliciously combine different skills. Undoubtedly Paz was able to do what we all want to do: to never die, to last, to remain.

Voices of Mexico could do no less than pay posthumous homage to a Mexican who transcended borders to become a universal citizen.

We include in this issue his last poem, translated by Eliot Weinberger, without a doubt the best interpreter of Paz' poetry in the United States. We also present three articles honoring him by important Paz scholars: Aurelio Asiain, Enrique Krauze and Gabriel Zaid, who, in addition to being well known figures in Mexican cultural circles, were close collaborators and friends of the great poet and thinker.



June 8 was a watershed for the international issue of drug trafficking. The stage of mutual accusations was finally left behind and, at United Nations headquarters, the countries of the world put themselves on the same side to confront their real common enemy. It finally seems feasible to formulate more successful strategies to face this extremely complex, overwhelming problem. If drug trafficking networks are international, the answer to them also must be worldwide. To overcome their differences, the governments must begin by building a common language and set of values on the issue to be able to move ahead in the creation of information networks that allow them to be one step ahead of the criminal syndicates. Of course, this is not easy: sharing information generates tactical vulnerability, putting agents at risk. The battle is not simple: with millions of dollars at stake, it is easy to open up new routes, find different allies, buy protection, blur the lines between the pursuers and the pursued. But with the children and adolescents of the world at risk, our differences must be forgotten, and we must put our best minds to work to design health, social, rehabilitation, sports, educational and punitive policies around this issue that are both

novel and revolutionary. Only in this way, attacking the multiple dimensions of the question within the context of globalization, will we be able to keep up our fighting spirit as we face such a grave challenge.

In today's process of redefinition of the three countries of North America, federalism is an issue of special interest. In Canada, the debate over jurisdiction and the federal and provincial governments dominates political discussion. In the United States today, a new kind of federalism comes into play as President Clinton's decision to return responsibility to the states for social policy restructures the welfare state. In the case of Mexico, the attributions of the federal executive and the state governors are also being redefined.

Jorge Javier Romero delves into the issue in our "Politics" section. Romero proposes new ideas about a question that has always been polemical in a country with a long, solid centralist tradition. Federalism is not the same as administrative decentralization. Transferring real power to the states, says Romero, means not just giving them attributions, but also having an impact on the political culture of the political actors in the regions and, above all, restructuring fiscal policies and making public administration professional. Without a civil service system that appropriately distributes technical and political functions, and without fair distribution of government revenues, attempts at federalist reforms will be condemned to failure, as Mexico's recent past shows. Diverse regional development also requires differentiated solutions appropriate to each situation.

Jesús Silva Herzog Márquez contributes an article about Mexico's political party system, warning that the current one has not been able to fill the ideological vacuums and provide the political proposals a country in search of real pluralism should aspire to. Both the reason behind this and the solution are to be found, he suggests, inside the country's three most important political forces, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, the National Action Party and the Party of the Democratic Revolution, who should all self-critically reformulate their platforms, action programs and alliances. That is to say that even though the doubts about electoral transparency have been dispelled, as the July 6, 1997, balloting shows, the main parties still have a long way to go before they consolidate institutionally. If they do not move in that direction the system runs the risk of breaking down and losing credibility with the voters.

The painting of Ricardo Martínez will never cease to surprise us. As writer Rafael Ruiz Harrel points out, it forces the viewer to look at characters who seem to take on a life of their own beyond the canvas: brilliant colors are born of black; movements within immensity; giant but delicate figures; long and voluptuous features; colossal sensuality. The section "Science, Art and Culture" begins with Ruiz Harrell's article about Martínez, a painter who has made an unquestionable place for himself in the history of Mexican visual arts.

To celebrate the International Day of Dance, María Tarriba has presented us with a lively contribution about one of the most original contemporary dance groups in Mexico: Dance-Theater Utopia, which has achieved international recognition and success, particularly in the United States.

The dissemination of democratic political culture and civic education are two pillars of the consolidation of democracy in Mexico. All efforts directed at children, then, will in the long run result in the education of better citizens. Several Mexican institutions have recently visualized and put into practice an ambitious program to inform and create awareness in the public about children's rights. The first activity they implemented was the children's elections on July 6, 1997. José Luis Gutiérrez describes the objectives and strategies of this unprecedented endeavor.

Anamario Hernández is a promising young Mexican painter who has been invited to exhibit in the United States. We include in this section a short article on her work by Mexican writer Anamari Gomis.

The importance of thinking about and analyzing the phenomenon of economic globalization is beyond question. What is Mexico's role in this new international situation? How is it inserting itself into world markets and what can it expect? How does its proximity to the United States and its being part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) affect it? All these questions are addressed in our "Economic Issues" section in an article by Carlos González which highlights the advantages and disadvantages of regionalization as a response to global-

ization, which has proven to be segmented and asymmetrical and has brought with it serious risks. Mexico must not forget this if it is to take better advantage of opportunities that present themselves.

We include in our "Society" section a contribution from Gabriel Estrella Valenzuela about projected demographic trends in northern Mexico through the first decade of the new millennium. The economic and political phenomena in the world's most complex border area have had a definitive impact on population dynamics in what is undoubtedly the socially most advanced region of Mexico. However, this economic and population growth has not been accompanied by a corresponding growth of infrastructure. We also present our readers with the thinking of researcher Virginia López Villegas about Mexican women scientists. Her aim is to analyze the gender-linked intersections and mutual impact of women's daily life and scientific activities.

The war of 1847 between the United States and Mexico, far from being a forgotten chapter in history, continues to concern historians and intellectuals from both countries. In her contribution to the "History" section, Josefina Zoraida Vázquez offers us a new reading of the events that 150 years ago definitively marked the destiny of both sides in the conflict.

In the "United States Affairs" section we offer an illustrative article by Elizabeth Gutiérrez on hemisphere-wide free trade. While President Clinton favors integration through a Free Trade Agreement for the Americas, this policy has not moved forward due to opposition from sectors of both the U.S. Congress and the public and the resultant non-authorization of the fast-track mechanism for its implementation. Many studies and research projects have been done on Mexicans and people of Mexican descent resident in the United States. Almost none, in contrast, have been done about U.S. residents in Mexico. Alejandro Mercado Celis has written a stimulating article for this same section, that proposes a research program to study this "other immigration," Americans moving south of the Rio Grande. His particular contribution deals with a case study of the U.S. artisan community in Mexico's state of Jalisco.

Elisa Dávalos presents in the "Canadian Issues" section a comparative analysis of two regional economic blocs that have adopted different "styles" of integration. NAFTA and Mercosur, both regional free trade efforts, have different limits and underlying conceptions. In this same section, we publish a very complete report by Abel Escartín on the development of the Mexico-Canada ministerial meetings, a mechanism for bilateral relations which over its long, fruitful existence, has consistently broadened out the issues, limits and objectives it deals with.

"The Splendor of Mexico" begins with a contribution by Miguel Angel Bahena and Luis Roberto Torres Escalona about the UNAM Central Library, explaining in detail the artistic, symbolic intentions underlying the wonderful murals by Juan O'Gorman that grace the building's four sides.

We have completed this section with a continuation of *Voices of Mexico's* tradition of disseminating the wonderful work of Mexican artisans among the English-speaking public. On this occasion, we include an article about Santa Clara del Cobre, a town in the state of Michoacán, famous for the undisputed beauty of its copper ware, made skillfully and with the singular aesthetic proposal of its local inhabitants.

The monarch butterfly's beauty and extraordinary coloring offer nature lovers a long-awaited spectacle every year in Michoacán and the State of Mexico. Joel Rodríguez Zúñiga and Carlos Hernández offer us articles about its biology and surroundings in the town of Angangueo in this issue's "Ecology" section.

"Museums" is dedicated to the UNAM's El Chopo Museum, the venue for innumerable exhibits and performances that reflect both university and community artistic sensibilities.

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