

OUR VOICE

Paradoxically, the great technological information revolution of the end of the millennium has also brought great uncertainty. Globalization brings with it both opportunities and enormous risks, and it is these risks that now perturb the euphoria we have felt since the fall of the Berlin Wall as well as the possibilities of economic development and redistribution of income. Adam Smith's invisible hand seems to be pressuring some countries and forgetting others. Hobbes' Leviathan tells us once again that it is unwilling to disappear from the scene.

The struggle between Adam Smith and Thomas Hobbes has still not concluded. The state cannot take charge of everything, but neither can the market function as the only supposedly fair mechanism for redistributing resources. Today, we continue to have need of the nation state to put a limit on speculative capital, which in its desperate striving for quick profits loses sight of the fact that the entire financial system may be affected, the economies of many countries unbalanced to the degree that the whole world economy could go into recession, to the detriment of everyone, including speculative capital itself.

The task before us is not an easy one: new mechanisms must be developed to encourage international investment without the fear of outside controls. Clearly, a joint decision is urgently needed to avoid the contagion of economic crises in the emerging system and to ensure new patterns in global financial transactions.

Amidst worldwide economic uncertainty, the United States has given itself the luxury of putting its institutions to the test in a brutal power struggle. In an adroit manoeuvre, Special Prosecutor Kenneth Starr gave a spectacular turn to the Whitewater case, cornering President Clinton into making statements about his personal life. Now, the world must wait to see what kind of democracy prevails in the United States: the democracy of a majority who, whether it approves or not of President Clinton's private life, recognizes the value of his political actions, or that of an active minority, ready to go to any extreme to impeach. We can only ask ourselves what the United States' founding fathers, the forgers of federalism, would say about this case. Would they feel proud of the mechanism they created? Or would they be shocked at the excesses committed using it? In this issue of *Voices of Mexico*, Juan Pablo Córdoba contributes an article to our "United States Affairs" section about "sexgate," its causes, meaning and implications.

Thirty years ago, on October 2, 1968, repression ended Mexico's student movement at the Three Cultures Plaza in Tlatelolco, with an undetermined number of victims, including dead, injured, jailed and hunted. We include three articles about this anniversary in our "Politics" section. Rolando Cordera's argues that the economic context of the 1960s was one of investments and growth, belying the idea that the 1968 student movement can be explained in merely economic terms. Even though the economy was very dynamic in 1968, population growth, migration to the cities and a slowdown in agricultural production made better distribution of income impossible. That is why demands were made for a better way of life, both political and economic. The government response was unimaginative and authoritarian. Luis Salazar's

article recognizes how unfortunate and painful that answer was, but argues that we must come to “a reconciliation with our own history” and build together a rule of law in which repression would be unthinkable. Lastly, Enrique Sevilla deals with the topic from the inside: as a former member of the National Strike Council, he asks himself about the consequences of the movement’s radicalization and the political tactics and strategies adopted by some of its leaders.

The section concludes with an article about a current lively debate in Mexico: municipal autonomy in areas inhabited by indigenous people. The political and legal debate is of great import, since its results could define the lines of action and agreements in the case of Chiapas. Legal expert Manuel González Oropeza and historian Ana Luisa Izquierdo offer our readers a profound look at this topic.

Mexican archaeologist and UNAM researcher María Teresa Calero begins our “Science, Art and Culture” section with an article about a fascinating discovery in an area that had always been considered uninhabited. The arrangement of the items and the pieces she found in tombs in northern Mexico tell much of the story of ancient indigenous peoples’ voyage to the afterworld. When we discover a tomb, inevitably, we catch a glimpse of our history.

Michoacán brings to mind the great painter Alfredo Zalce, who has painted its lakes, mountains, colors, towns, inhabitants and crafts. His masterful technique combines with Michoacán’s beautiful scenery, its customs and people to give us work we can proudly show abroad. Well known art critic and director of the Modern Art Museum Teresa del Conde has presented us with an article in this section about Zalce’s life and painting. Another art critic, Augusto Isla, takes a detailed look at the relationship between Zalce’s life and work by examining some of his paintings.

Anyone familiar with Mexico recognizes the unique place Our Lady of Guadalupe plays in our lives, in our religious ceremonies, in our national character. In this issue, Margarita Zires reviews the drawings of Michael Walker, who portrays the virgin as an undocumented immigrant, an undocumented worker, a fighter against racial discrimination. Drawings and text mingle to bring our readers a very special article that sheds light on Mexico, the United States and Chicana women.

In our “Economy” section, North American economies specialist Mónica Gambrell looks at the different wage levels in Mexico’s maquiladora industry. She examines the relationship between more exacting skill requirements, union organization and higher wages. Gambrell asserts that the North American Free Trade Agreement has opened up the possibility for a different kind of production—the development of manufacturing plants as opposed to maquiladoras—which could in turn make for greater demand for skilled workers and, therefore, higher wages.

Unfortunately, as we near the end of the millennium, Mexico’s higher education still suffers from many deficiencies. Though progress has been made, population growth has sharpened the problem to such a degree that much more is required. In his article “Dilemmas and Challenges for Modernizing Higher Education in Mexico,” in our “Society” section, Roberto Rodríguez, one of our leading educational specialists, points to some of the indispensable changes needed to deal with globalization, underlining the leading role the university will have to play in the future.

The use of the term “America” to refer only to the United States has been considered an affront by citizens of other countries in the hemisphere. Although this is an ideological question strongly embedded in the political culture of the citizens of the United States, in the long run it may be possible to change, if not the linguistic practice itself, then its meaning with regard to other peoples and nations. This is an idea fostered by John Studstill in his article “A Rose by Any Other Name. A Modest Yet Radical Proposal About America” in the “United States Affairs” section.

“The Splendor of Mexico” centers on the state of Michoacán, known for its natural beauty, crafts and cultural practices. Every year on the Day of the Dead, boats decorated with candles and masses of flowers in brilliant hues light up Pátzcuaro Lake in remembrance of the dead. This unforgettable spectacle is repeated every November 2 in much of Mexico, but most beautifully in Pátzcuaro. Michoacán is also known for its marvelous wealth of crafts. Marcela Segura Coquet’s article describes the variety of clay crafts that exist there. For centuries, techniques have been passed down from father to son, making it possible for entire towns and regions to maintain their identity and protect their trade. Mexico’s markets are renowned for being full of crafts, but undoubtedly, Michoacán stands out among all the rest. The articles in this section about *maque* lacquered products and items made of cornstalk paste, using beautiful, original pre-Hispanic techniques, and the town of Tlalpujahua and the crafts made there, bring our readers close to this wonderful state.

“Ecology” contributes an article on the Mexican wolf by Edgar Anaya Rangel. For different reasons, except for a few specimens living in captivity, this species is extinct. Anaya Rangel describes the species’ significance and alerts us to the consequences of not having clear policies for protecting endangered wildlife.

The National Folk Cultures Museum is very important to Mexican culture. Conceived to exhibit the wealth of arts and crafts produced throughout Mexico, the idea of “folk culture” includes everything made by the human spirit rooted in the deepest folk traditions and beliefs. The museum has more than lived up to its goal, as can be seen in the article written by its director Sol Rubín de la Borbolla.

Three important Quebec museums have had exhibitions on Mexican art and crafts to show Canadians some of the grandeur of Mexican culture. In our “Canadian Issues” section, Dianne Pearce reviews them, telling us how “the old and the new meet to form a postmodern country of harmonious contradiction.”

This section also includes an article by Carlos Rico about Mexico’s relations with Canada in which he points out that, while all the possibilities of the bilateral relations had never been explored, the two countries do agree on many foreign policy questions, as evidenced by their similar voting in international bodies. However, these common positions have not been presented jointly. In Rico’s opinion, our relations are much closer today than before and, while this can create differences, the maturity they imply make the differences easier to accept.

Juan Villoro is one of the most brilliant of Mexico’s forty-something generation of writers. In our “Literature” section, we include one of his most recent short stories, representative of his work.

Voices of Mexico pays well deserved homage to three outstanding Mexicans in its “In Memoriam” section. The first is the eminent doctor Salvador Zubirán, who not only made significant contributions to modern medicine, but was also known for his dedication to public health, particularly those programs that aimed at bettering the general health and health care for the underprivileged. José Angel Conchello, the second, was recognized not only by his colleagues in the National Action Party, but even by his political adversaries, as an honest, combative politician dedicated body and soul to the cause of democracy in Mexico. Lastly, Elena Garro, was perhaps the most important Mexican woman writer of the second half of the century, whose work has undoubtedly influenced the new generations of writers.

Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla

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