

Globalization through education

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The brief phrase "Live and learn, learn and live," contains an important message. It means that a person who lives and does not learn is not fully alive. If education has not illuminated his intellect, he is condemned to the worst kind of slavery, the slavery of ignorance. Without education, man is incapable of communicating with others. He lives on the edge of society, in the dark realm of illiteracy.

Education is the only means, the only instrument, whereby we can know who we are. From our earliest schooling, we are taught the basic "history of our country," our country's background, that enables us to understand the present as the fruit of roots sunk deep in the past.

I will refer briefly to my own country, a mestizo land, the result of the fusion of native and European cultures by way of Spain. It is impossible to understand contemporary Mexico without a knowledge of the history of its indigenous communities, the three centuries during which Mexico, as New Spain, was part of the Spanish Empire, and the period from its independence until the present day.

Following the defeat of Tenochtitlan, Fray Bernardo de Sahagún, aware of the importance of

the country's indigenous past, gathered together a number of distinguished native Mexicans. Thanks to the records of what his informants told him, we now know about the institutions, social life and other aspects of pre-Hispanic civilizations.

Shortly after the beginning of this new society called New Spain, a college called the Holy Cross of Tlatelolco was established to educate native Mexicans. This was the institution that graduated the first generation of a new country. Transformed by contact with a new culture, they graduated in three languages, Nahuatl, Spanish and Latin, then the universal language.

To quote only one of several examples, the Cruz Badiano Codex records the Aztec herbology, the finest in the continent, far superior to anything available in Europe. Martín de la Cruz set down the native description of these herbs in Nahuatl, illustrating his work with drawings of medicinal herbs done by native hands. The son of the first Viceroy, Don Antonio de Mendoza, realized the importance of Martín de la Cruz' work and asked another Mexican, Juan Badiano, to translate it into Latin.

Both Cruz and Badiano were among the first pupils at the College of the Holy Cross of Tlatelolco and later became teachers there

themselves. They taught Spanish, Latin and Nahuatl to the sons of Spaniards born in Mexico.

The Codex was sent to Europe, where it was kept in the Vatican Library for several centuries, until it returned to Mexico in 1990.

Mexican history is taught in our schools alongside world history, awakening our students to the wealth and variety of world culture.

In our curricula, world history tends to focus on ancient Greece, with its enlightened philosophy, Rome and its extraordinary judicial organization, and Europe with its recurrent wars. Less attention is paid to our Northern neighbors. This lack of mutual knowledge occasionally causes conflicts which could be avoided if we each knew more about our neighbor's institutions and culture.

A binational group, composed of ten representatives from each country, was set up for the first time, in 1986, to enable both countries to find out more about each other. We met over a period of two and a half years in both Mexico and the United States to analyze our main bilateral problems: the economy, migration, drug abuse, and the occasionally contrary positions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

The last meeting was devoted to a concrete proposal: the improvement of bilateral relations through education, which would make the differences between the two countries understandable and encourage mutual respect, the basis of civilized co-existence between nations.

Mexico is the only Spanish-speaking country to share a border with the Anglo-Saxons of the North. In Mexico, we are Ibero-indigenous by virtue of mixture and a syncretism that still goes on today. The United States is inhabited predominantly by Anglo-Saxons, with institutions that differ from our own.

Canada is a highly industrialized country like the United States and

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enjoys a standard of living similar to that of the US.

Mexico is a developing country. Economic asymmetry with the North is obvious. However, Mexico's history extends farther back.

During the recent New York exhibition of Mexico's indigenous and colonial past, and modern Mexico, visitors were surprised by the breadth of Mexican history, comparable to the richest of any in the world. Our vigorous cultural history is the foundation of our identity.

The NAFTA will strengthen economic ties with the North, without affecting cultural identity. We must, therefore, encourage learning in the national characteristics of each of our three countries. Their culture, language and history are the most powerful manifestation of their sovereignty.

Serious international problems, such as drug abuse, can be attacked in primary schools, where children can also learn respect for the environment, now threatened as never before.

The problem of drug abuse is currently being combatted in each of its three main phases: production, trafficking and use. Ever since the 1988 Vienna meeting, where the most important United Nations document against drug abuse was signed, combatting individual addiction through education against drug abuse has been regarded as the most effective policy. The free market system has taught us that in the absence of demand, the supply vanishes and production will therefore cease.

Great emphasis has been placed on education as a means of combatting drug abuse. A world-wide effort to show younger generations the individual and social harm caused by illegal drug-dealing and the consumption that fuels it, might be the most successful policy.

If drug production is successfully halted in one country, while demand continues to increase, then drugs will simply be supplied by another country.

If, on the other hand, an individual is educated from childhood to reject drugs, the effect will be lasting.

Pollution of our endangered environment is another world problem that requires general education. In their latest book, *The first global revolution*, King and Schneider discuss general worldwide destruction of the environment. The book covers water, land and air, mentioning once crystal lakes whose waters are now brackish and poisoned. The Sargasso Sea is now a rubbish dump that is affecting marine life. Industrial waste, discharged through factory chimneys and drain-pipes the world over, is destroying the environment and seriously threatens the surrounding population.

The so-called Third World needs to follow in the footsteps of the industrialized nations, but it must recognize its obligation to adapt modern technology to the preservation of the environment. Uncontrolled development in the industrialized nations has destroyed the world's ecological balance, producing global warming and tearing a hole in the ozone layer over the South Pole.

On the threshold of development, the Third World must compete in the world market with products that do not harm the environment, and the industrialized nations must prevent pollution by changing products and the way they are produced. Education has a lot to contribute in this respect.

It has often been said, particularly regarding Third World countries, that there can be no development without democracy, and one might also add, there can be no development or democracy without education. Democracy is based and thrives on the education of the people. Its foundation is the essential equality of the human race.

Social justice must also be one of development's principal goals. Development cannot succeed without social justice, just as social justice

cannot be applied unless there is progress.

The poverty among our peasants and in the big city slums goes hand in hand with ignorance. Education can break this vicious circle.

Democracy arises from the basic equality of the human race and is based on education and a fair standard of living. Social justice progresses far more slowly than the current rate of economic growth, due to mechanization, high productivity and new technology.

Canada, the United States and Mexico are negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Europe set the example when Belgium joined Luxembourg and demonstrated the benefits of working together to achieve a common goal. Further confirmation was provided by the addition of the Netherlands to form BENELUX. The establishment of Saarland resolved the dispute between France and Germany over that steel and coal producing basin. Jean Monet and Robert Schuman, together with other distinguished politicians, decided on the unification of Europe and finally signed the 1957 Treaty of Rome.

Force destroys regional unity. Whereas, a European union has been forged by peaceful means, in keeping with agreements under which the opinion and interest of all parties have been respected. The overall economic benefits to the area might also be mentioned, but there is a more important reality. Today, conflict in a united Europe could not bring about another world war. The fact that national interests have been united in a regional pact guarantees the peace of the area.

In a 1983 interview, a year after the publication of the book entitled *L'Europe*, to which he contributed, Fernand Braudel stressed the importance of reinforcing European identity through culture. He mentioned the need for more student and teacher exchanges between universities in the



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various countries, to strengthen the common intellectual basis of a united Europe through education.

Braudel noted previous commercial centers which had not been cultural centers. Venice was never a cultural center, though the great trade of Europe passed through it, whereas it was in Florence that the Renaissance began. The great literary figures of the time wrote in Tuscan. A European University has now been established in Florence, and other cities have followed suit.

The intent, like that of many intellectuals, is based on its resurgence as a cultural center that will continue to influence the rest of the world, without affecting the individuality of other countries of the European community.

Our continent has responded to the current trend toward globalization, first with the Free Trade Agreement between the US and Canada, then with the inclusion of Mexico, and finally with a project for a continental market to include all the countries in the hemisphere.

In addition, Mexico has signed an agreement with Chile and is currently negotiating with other South American countries. The trend toward uniting large regions in pursuit of "one world" is now a historic current that no event can change.

If the world is moving towards globalization, it must consider the

importance of international organizations. The United Nations was created just under fifty years ago, to deal with the affairs of the time. But the resolution of our present problems, caused by regionalization and defense of the environment, requires that the UN be restructured.

I believe that one of the UN's greatest weaknesses and a feature that must be changed, is the right of "veto" in the Security Council, a privilege that contravenes the fundamental rules of international democracy.

Man's tendency to wage war has, surprisingly, been curbed by the destructiveness of modern weaponry. This century's wars have forced man to reflect on the horrifying cost of victory. As a result, international instruments have been established, by virtue of which the nations have formed a court in which judges from all of them sit to consider conflicts and propose peaceful solutions.

The splitting of the atom, the creating of the atomic bomb and the ensuing tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki caused man to react with revulsion at the destructive force of such modern weapons, and this revolution has forced us to live in peace. A nuclear world war would cause a "nuclear winter" in which "the living would envy the dead."

The logical consequence of the arms race is the destruction of the

human race.

History has proved that fundamental changes must be made if we wish to survive; we must forbid the use of nuclear power for war and use it for peace instead.

The old saying, "If you want peace, prepare for war," was invalidated by the discovery of

nuclear power. If you want peace, prepare for peace, must be our motto for the next century. And it is education that will provide us with the means to prepare ourselves to live in peace.

The former Soviet Union and the United States spent astronomical sums of money on the production of ever more expensive, swift, lethal and destructive weapons. The arms race brought about the collapse of the former USSR's economy and many of the United States' current economic problems. We need education to sustain world public opinion against arms.

Edward Shevardnadze called his recent book, *The future belongs to freedom*. In it he advances the idea of freedom through democracy, an idea particularly significant at this moment, coming as it does from a survivor of communist dictatorship, particularly since it is shared by the majority of his compatriots.

Now, with the end to the "cold war" and the first steps towards disarmament of both conventional and thermonuclear weapons, the world has a historic opportunity to divert resources which were once wasted on arms to the benefit of culture and development for everyone. The next century will be the century of freedom based on education. An educated man is a free man \mathcal{N}