

Our voice

One of the world's most widespread problems today concerns the economy. In Mexico, the Gross Domestic Product for last year was low, while the GDP for this year will be lower than expected and less than the rate of population growth.

In addition, wealth has been concentrated in the hands of a few, while the majority of the poor have experienced a considerable drop in living standards. Forty per cent of the population lives in poverty, of whom 14 million live in extreme poverty. This poses an enormous challenge to the government and Mexican society as a whole.

The Banco de México, a highly prestigious institution, publishes an annual report on the Mexican economy. In this issue we present a summary of the 1993 report, including the government's main achievements as well as negative aspects still to be solved.

It is essential that the next government, together with the rest of society, move rapidly to reactivate the economy, in order to create the jobs that are needed and overhaul the education system to combat the high incidence of illiteracy. Democracy is the appropriate context for achieving these aims. To this end, political parties should try to establish firm bases to ensure that the forthcoming elections will be faultless.

Miguel Angel Ortega comments on the conclusions of the bank's report, as well as its predictions for the Mexican economy this year.

NAFTA has sparked a growing interest within Mexico, the United States and Canada in learning more about each other. Two Canadians, Thomas Legler and Linda Hossie, contribute descriptions of the Canadian government from the time of Mulroney until Chrétien's current administration, and Canadians' view of Mexico, respectively.

Now is the time for these three countries to get to know each other better in every aspect. Knowledge of another country, as well as enriching one's culture, leads to a profound respect, which is the basis for civilized coexistence.

The Center for Research on North America at the National University of Mexico receives distinguished young researchers from other countries.

Santiago Benítez Pérez, a distinguished Cuban researcher, contributes an article on a subject ever-present in Mexicans' minds: United States-Cuban relations. Mexico still hopes it will be possible to achieve a solution respecting the key principles of non-intervention and self-determination for countries as outlined in the United Nations Charter, rather than destructive confrontations.

The figure of Subcomandante Marcos has sparked worldwide interest. Instead of using force against the rebels, the government has decided to seek peace in the region through dialogue and agreement. Fernando Chamizo, Assistant Director of Radio Universidad, was granted an extensive interview with Subcomandante Marcos somewhere in the mountains of southern Mexico.

Chamizo himself summarized the highlights of the interview, together with which we provide an account of the current state of the peace talks.

This issue contains an article on a historic event that took place in Mexico: the first debate between presidential candidates.

A tribute was recently paid to Octavio Paz, Mexican writer and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1990, for his eight decades devoted to poetry, politics and history. His complete works, published in both Spain and Mexico,



are a valuable contribution to Spanish, the main language of this continent.

From the outset, the Mexican Muralist Movement, started by Dr. Atl (Gerardo Murillo) and continued by Diego Rivera, Clemente Orozco and numerous others, attracted a French painter, Jean Charlot, who was honored this month at the Colegio de San Ildefonso, a jewel of Colonial architecture. Charlot's muse was Luz, an Indian woman who introduced him to our great culture. Two of Luz'

grand-daughters, Raquel and Laura Villanueva, are members of our editorial staff.

Mexico boasts several exponents of the historical novel. Mariano Azuela (*Los de abajo* — *The Underdogs*), Martín Luis Guzmán (*La sombra del caudillo* — *Shadow of a Caudillo*), Fernando del Paso (*Noticias del imperio* — *News of the Empire*) and Carlos Fuentes are some of the writers who have excelled in this literary genre, as the article by Eugenio Aguirre demonstrates.

Remedios Varo, a painter with an extraordinary imagination, spent her finest years in Mexico. A very complete exhibition of her works was held recently and Dinorah Isaak presents a new view of the artist, based on interviews with her widower and biographers. Numerous visitors have now been able to explore Remedios' dream world.

In keeping with the magazine's tradition, this issue presents a description of the San Carlos Museum by Elisa García Barragán, as a further example of the plurality of the culture of Mexico, a mestizo country in constant fusion ✎

Hugo B. Margáin
Editorial Director.