

OUR VOICE

Presidents Ernesto Zedillo and William Clinton had their seventh bilateral meeting February 14 and 15 in Mérida, Yucatán. It was not the best of moments for either of the two.

Although the U.S. president's impeachment trial ended well for him, the celebration in the White House had to be held behind closed doors: the delicate and disagreeable process has been, undoubtedly, the most critical moment in U.S. political history since Nixon's resignation, not to mention the cost to the president personally and to his public image. While during the Nixon administration people talked about an imperial presidency, the term "presidency under siege" was coined for the current occupant of the White House. Republican senators had to face the dilemma of removing a president who, although he probably committed perjury and obstruction of justice, also created 18 million jobs, significantly raised wages, achieved a balanced budget for the first time in 30 years and reduced the crime rate as never before. Finally, 10 Republican senators decided to vote to acquit.

President Zedillo, on the other hand, was about to have to face the U.S. Congress's certification decision about Mexico on the question of the fight against drug trafficking, an unfortunate, unilateral measure in a field which requires cooperation above everything else. Drug trafficking, of course, was the topic that determined the tone of the meeting. Although undoubtedly there have been advances on the issue—for example, the old way of looking at the question in which each party blamed the other has been left behind, and new focuses and strategies have been developed by creating high level discussion groups—the fact is that the drug trade is an increasingly difficult problem and its solution more and more complex. It will only be possible to design efficient strategies for fighting international drug trafficking through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms which include the consent of the nations involved.

Despite everything, however, the Mérida meeting was a success. The excellent personal relationship between the two presidents was the framework in which they signed nine cooperation accords on the environment, finance, the border and migration. Both chief executives' good will contributes to creating trust in such an intense, complex relationship, just as it facilitates dialogue and curtails tensions.

In this issue's "United States Affairs," Juan Pablo Córdoba analyzes the repercussions of Clinton's impeachment trial on the U.S. public and on Mexico-U.S. relations. He looks at the consequences of the intricate and not always clear link between the media and politics in the United States, as well as the Republicans' mistaken strategy in the Clinton-Lewinsky case.

1999 is a year of balance sheets. Five years have passed since two events that have been determining factors in Mexico: the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas and the coming into effect of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The "Politics" section includes researcher Raúl Benítez Manaut's thoughts about the advances, retreats and stalemates in the peace negotiations in Chiapas. He calls it a postmodern guerrilla war, par-

ticularly in comparison with the rebel movements in Central America. Internet is used as one of its main weapons and strategies have been designed on the basis of building national and international solidarity networks, above all with the United States, Canada and Europe. In a word, a war without bullets.

In the "Economy" section, specialist Luis Rubio explains how the first five years of NAFTA have had positive results for Mexico. He maintains, in fact, that far from being the cause of the country's economic problems, the trade opening with the United States and Canada has allowed the domestic private sector to modernize and eliminated negative protectionist practices that the Mexican government used to protect industrialists and businessmen.

On this same question, Paulino Arellanes takes a detailed look at foreign investment flows in Mexico during the first half of the Zedillo administration. He describes how most investment from abroad has gone into speculative, volatile financial ventures and very little into production. The results have been disastrous, as demonstrated by the 1995-1996 crisis. Arellanes maintains that the supposed benefits of globalization and NAFTA itself should be questioned on these grounds.

One effect of globalization has been the fall in international oil prices. In their article, specialists Rosío Vargas and Víctor Rodríguez examine the diplomatic strategies and measures that the Mexican government has implemented to defend its production together with other oil producing countries. They argue that one of the fundamental points that has determined decisions on this question is Mexico's close relationship and economic dependence on the United States.

Globalization affects all spheres of society. In fact, the very notion of sovereignty has to be rethought. This is the aim of Roberto Gutiérrez, whose article in the "Politics" section asserts that the end of the millennium is characterized by a harmonizing thrust which affects not only the global market but also political institutions and practices. In that sense, it is only through democratic systems, with institutions that foster pluralism and participation, and with the existence of states legitimized by consensus, that globalization can be dealt with constructively, in a way which respects national particularities and ethnic, cultural and religious diversity.

Mexican politics is already in the throes of the 2000 presidential race. The political parties are defining their strategies and choosing new national leaderships, and a few nominee hopefuls have even begun campaigning. This issue includes two articles on this topic. Juan Reyes del Campillo appraises the profound transformation of electoral geography in recent years and shows how pluralism and greater competition have produced a great many state and municipal victories for parties other than the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and that this means that several scenarios are possible for the year 2000.

Alberto Begné examines Mexico's current party system with an eye to July 2, 2000. In this framework, he foresees possible important changes in the three strongest parties, particularly if they want to continue to be part of the system after what will be the most highly contested election in the country's history.

Puebla is a state known for its cultural diversity and artistic riches. This issue's cultural sections have dedicated an important part of their pages to it. We offer our readers an article about the work of Puebla-born painter Guillermo Gómez Mayorga, perhaps the best known painter of Puebla's scenery and sunsets. We also have a contribution by Francisco Pérez de Salazar about the most popular and world famous craft product made in Puebla: Talavera ceramics. Mónica Pérez-Salazar and Angeles Espinosa Iglesias tempt our palate with tales of Puebla cuisine, and Arturo Córdova regales us with a description of the magnificent Palafoxiana Library with its rich historic tradition.

Puebla is the home of the Popocateptl volcano, in the news recently because, with columns of smoke and ash, it has been announcing its intention of awakening. Tom Dieusaert writes about

“Don Goyo,” as the locals call the mountain, introducing us to the magic and legend of the town of Tetela del Volcán and its inhabitants, including those responsible for “talking to” the volcano.

“Science, Art and Culture” includes an article about the monumental city of Teotihuacan. Linda Manzanilla explains the original link between its architecture and the structure of government. She tells us about its utensils, crafts, political alliances with other pre-Columbian peoples in a very readable article that ably evokes the priest-rulers walking along the well laid-out avenues of a sumptuously ornamented city.

In the “Canadian Issues” section, Felipe Soto describes the forging of the most recent autonomous Canadian territory, Nunavut, governed as of April 1 by its original inhabitants, the Inuit (known for centuries by outsiders as “eskimos”). Soto zeroes in on the implications that the agreement has on the pursuit of solutions in a multicultural society like Canada, regarding autonomy and indigenous peoples’ rights, a timely topic not only in Canada, but elsewhere.

Pope John Paul II’s visit January 22 to 26 filled Mexico with joy, hope and religious enthusiasm. Millions of people waited long hours in the streets to see the Holy Father even if only for a second. Ricardo Ampudia, author of a recently published book about the historic role of the Vatican in Mexico, writes in this issue about the Pope’s visit and its pastoral implications.

In the “Society” section, we address the question of Mexican migration to the United States, but this time, not from the standpoint of statistics, conflicts, policies, costs and even the deaths involved in this complex issue. In her article, Luz María Valdés presents the human face of cold statistics. She tells us the story of the relationship between an immigrant and his employer in the United States, and how, thanks to the latter, a network was created to intimately link the inhabitants of Cotija, Michoacán, with New York City, in an example of how immigration is also a weave of personal histories, relationships, cooperation, work, effort and mutual benefits.

Along the same lines, specialist Mariángela Rodríguez writes about the symbols and myths that have made up the Chicano identity in Los Angeles. Specifically, she delves into Chicano discourses and political positions with regard to the celebration of a Mexican national holiday, May 5.

On the eve of the new millennium, we have decided to inaugurate the dissemination of work by young artists, painters and writers, who are today the promise of vast creative production in the first decades of the twenty-first century. In “Science, Art and Culture,” we present the work of painter Mario Núñez, described and analyzed by María Tarriba. In “Literature” we include a fragment from a novel by the young writer Alvaro Enrígue, along with a penetrating critique by Juan Villoro.

Carlos Bravo Marentes offers us an article in the “Ecology” section about the sustainable uses of resources for producing crafts in Mexico’s subtropical regions. He emphasizes the importance of fostering knowledge about the environment in order to ensure economic activity that relates rationally to their surroundings.

In “Museums” we include a contribution by Arturo Cosme about one of Mexico’s most attractive private art collections —now public property— in Puebla’s Bello Museum.

Lastly, we pay homage to an exceptional woman in the history of Mexican art, María Asúnsolo, who recently died.

At the close of this edition, one of Mexico’s greatest poets, Jaime Sabines, died. We will dedicate our “Literature” section to him in our next issue. For the moment, we offer our condolences to his family, friends and the great fraternity of his readers.

Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla

Director of CISAN