

# OUR VOICE

This year both the United States and Mexico will hold presidential elections only four months apart. Undoubtedly, they will be particularly important for the positioning of both countries with regard to our bilateral relations in the twenty-first century. In contrast to previous races, this year's Mexican elections are especially interesting for U.S. political analysts and actors alike because perhaps for the first time the results are not a foregone conclusion. There is no telling who the winner will be; even the most recent opinion polls contradict each other. While uncertainty is one of the characteristics of living in a democracy, it is also relatively new to Mexican political culture. This is the reason for the great expectation and interest in following the campaigns on the part of the public in both Mexico and the United States.

In the United States, the campaigns are now taking shape and centering on the candidates' personalities: Al Gore, the "new Democrat," and George Bush, the "centrist Republican." From the Mexican perspective—and even in the opinion of much of the U.S. public—the two show only slight ideological differences and their proposals tend to overlap. In Mexico, the ideological spectrum is much broader and the candidates do represent different political options: Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas is on the left; Francisco Labastida, in the center; and Vicente Fox, on the right. This makes today's real competition for power much more interesting in terms of the changes that it might bring.

In this context, *Voices of Mexico* interviewed four of Mexico's presidential hopefuls about their views and proposals for relations with the United States and Canada. The idea is to offer our readers a panorama of their positions, so they can see similarities and differences, as well as contrast them with the ideas that President Ernesto Zedillo expressed on the same topic in our last issue.

Supplementing this information, Alejandro Becerra contributes an article analyzing the three main parties' platform positions on relations with the United States. Becerra considers that Vicente Fox emphasizes the importance of diversifying Mexico's foreign relations, while underlining the historic importance of our relations with the United States. By comparison Francisco Labastida takes a more regional view, proposing a strategy of joint regional solutions and projects in lieu of strictly national ones; and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas has a more critical position, going so far as to propose the need to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, and alerting about the problems that he thinks globalization can bring. The three candidates also agree on some points: for example, they all think it is a priority to find immediate solutions to the problem of the constant violation of the human rights of Mexican migrants to the United States.

Researcher and political scientist César Cansino also writes in our “Politics” section about the coming elections, explaining that he thinks Mexico has not yet completed the transition to democracy. According to Cansino, our political system still combines democratic practices with other, more ambiguous and ambivalent practices left over from authoritarianism.

To round out the topic of Mexican politics and elections, Isidro Cisneros proposes a periodization of the transformations in Mexican politics during the twentieth century. He identifies five political cycles, the last of which has just begun and which he calls “democratic cohabitation,” for which he proposes a series of future scenarios, not all of which are particularly promising.

Patricia de los Ríos contributes an article on the U.S. elections in which she underlines the important role that money plays in the campaigns, to the extent that the great majority of the candidates who withdrew from the race did so because of financial difficulties. She also emphasizes the importance of this year’s legislative races, given the possibility of the Democrats’ recovering a majority in the House of Representatives. Lastly, she looks at the decisive impact the Hispanic vote will have in this year’s elections.

This issue’s “United States Affairs” section also presents an article by Mónica Vereá, a specialist in Mexican migration to the United States. She presents an overview of the different U.S. immigration laws and measures over the twentieth century in a balance sheet that underlines the conservative trends that had the upper hand at the end of the century. In Vereá’s opinion, nativist positions have dominated these trends, seeking to restrict migration without taking into consideration at all its benefits to the United States.

The section closes with an article by researcher José Luis Valdés dealing with the very current ideology of interventionism disguised in the discourse of Americanism that our neighbor to the north still uses as a strategy for “detente” —very much in the Cold War tradition— to curb social and political movements in what it considers its exclusive area of influence, Latin America.

This issue’s “Science, Art and Culture” section presents the work of Carlos Torres, an important Mexican painter whose work excels because of its originality, particularly his geometric handling of empty spaces and his construction of visual proposals in the form of puzzles. Writer Luis González de Alba and art critic and journalist Yuriria Iturriaga both contribute articles about Torres. Mario Pacheco completes the section with an article about the new Mexican cinema, which is now undoubtedly experiencing a boom. Pacheco reviews the work of directors Carlos Bolado, Fernando Sariñana, Antonio Serrano and Alejandro Springall, all winners of national or international film awards.

Rodolfo Tuirán looks at demographic aging in Mexico in our “Society” section, alerting the reader to this phenomenon that, although still insufficiently taken into account, will soon bring political, social and economic changes, like the conversion of industry and the transformation of voter profiles, and which, if not dealt with in time, could have grave consequences. Tuirán points out that the new demands of older adults could surpass society’s capability to deal with them if programs and plans are not designed to do so beginning now. All this will imply changes in our institutions to deepen the support given to the aged over the next 30 to 50 years.

Our “History” section boasts an interesting article by writer Alvaro Ruiz Abreu on the Cristero movement, which emerged after the Mexican Revolution, and its impact on the literature of its time. Abreu maintains that many of the most important literary works of the first half of the cen-

tury were inspired in Cristero —and therefore Catholic— ideology, but that they received little recognition because of the ideological and cultural hegemony of the 1910 armed movement and its “literature of the Revolution.”

Also in the “History” section is the first of a series of articles about what is today the Mexico City neighborhood of San Angel, previously a provincial town steeped in history and tradition. Jim Fogarty writes about the famous Saint Patrick’s Battalion, many of whose members were executed in San Angel. Fogarty’s article vindicates the bravery and moral stand taken by this handful of men who deserted the U.S. army to join a cause they considered just, that of defending Mexico against arbitrary foreign intervention. The gesture of the Irishmen of the Saint Patrick’s Battalion must be seen not as treason to their invading army, but as an act of following their consciences and taking a stand for justice.

Both the “Splendor of Mexico” and “Museums” sections are dedicated to San Angel. Its history, its architecture, its traditions, its cultural wealth and its social and economic transformations, in sum, the overall fate of this corner of Mexico City, so well known for its beauty, are all brought into sharp relief for us by writers Jaime Abundis and María García Lascuráin. They take us on a walk through the cobblestoned streets and by the majestic monuments and buildings of San Angel at different times in its history. We reserved a special place for the incomparable El Carmen Museum because of its importance and its fine collection.

In “Canadian Issues,” specialist Elisa Dávalos analyzes Canada’s role in foreign direct investment in Latin America in light of the emergence of globalized production processes. While Canadian FDI has advanced, it still has not made any inroads into U.S. hegemony.

The “Ecology” section presents an article by Edit Antal about climate change, analyzing the reasons behind the contrasting positions of the United States and the European Union countries on one of today’s most complex questions. Antal identifies influences behind the official stances, such as different cultural perceptions of the issue; the character of environmental policies; the decision-making processes; and the institutional structure of each of the two actors.

In our “Literature” section, we once again include a sample of the work of two young Mexican poets, whose proposals point the way to a boom in Mexican poetry. Eduardo Hurtado comments on the work of poets Fernando Fernández and Eduardo Vázquez, both part of a promising literary generation.

*Voices of Mexico* profoundly regrets the death of one of the great symbols of Mexico’s twentieth-century intelligentsia, journalist, writer and researcher of Mexican indigenous cultures, Fernando Benítez, to whom we pay homage in our “In Memoriam” section. Lastly, in the name of all the magazine’s collaborators and my own, we would like to send our warmest congratulations to Juan Villoro, esteemed friend and contributor to this publication, upon his being awarded the Xavier Villaurrutia Prize for literature.

Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla  
**Director of CISAN**