

OUR VOICE

After the close of this edition, we have faced a new stage in the international conflict that began with the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. It all stems from the crisis which began September 11, date of the most serious terrorist attack that any Western country has ever suffered in peace time, an attack that shook the whole world. On the same day that Washington and London began their attacks on his training camps in Afghanistan, Osama bin Ladin, the leader of Al Qaeda and main suspect of being behind the September 11 attacks, said "I swear that the United States will not experience peace until Palestine does and until the Western armies of the infidel leave the Holy Lands." In this statement, we find both a declaration of principles and even war bordering on fanaticism and a turning point in relations between the West and the Arab world. It is probably also the beginning of a fourth stage in the long process of changes that the international system has gone through since the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, the end of World War II and the destruction of the Axis and the end of the bipolar era. From now on, September 11 will be recognized as the date that changed the eventful period following the end of the Cold War. The implications of the events we are witnessing will probably escalate enough so that we see a partial repetition of something like the Cold War. Conflicts will once again make their appearance on the international scene. However, the most important thing may be seeing the clash between the private Islamic fundamentalist cells that operate inside countries which they target for revenge, such as the United States, and the response of the states affected by this new threat.

The consequences of the terrible September 11 events remain uncertain and difficult to determine in the international concert. Much reflection is also needed. The world, which had not had time to effect a relatively harmonious change although —why not?— it did have the expectation of achieving a certain equilibrium, has been rendered silent by the magnitude of events. For now, we can say that the international system has been bound even more tightly by 1) the historic relationship between globality and conflict; 2) the absence of a balance of power and the preeminence of unipolarity; 3) the lack of definition of matters of order vis-à-vis those of justice, with today's absence of international institutionalization; 4) the conflict around the question of a civilizing mandate; and 5) regional instability as a new focus of conflict. Given this scenario, traditional equilibriums will be changed and traditional alliances will be based on highly sophisticated security strategies. What is more, the United States will see an unprecedented regimen of domestic security and U.S. society will go through a critical stage, also unprecedented, in which the traditional security standards that were thought to make it the world's safest society will be seriously affected. All of this will have a permanent effect on its domestic norms and its social practices. In that sense, we could say that just as we are seeing the modification of the paradigm within which terrorism has traditionally operated, we are also directly witnessing the effect on the paradigms of physical security and emotional stability of the entire U.S. populations (including the impact of the threat of biological warfare). This will, of course, have long term implications for life, social organization and eventually the social and political systems in the United States.

Naturally the terrorist attacks on U.S. objectives and their consequences mean a crucial readjustment of international relations in the near future and will significantly affect Mexico, just as they will all the world's nations. A first sign of this is the unconditional support given to the United States by both President Fox and Foreign Minister Castañeda. For this reason, in our "Mexico-United States Affairs" section, North

American national security specialist Raúl Benítez Manaut describes in detail why Mexico must participate in the alliance against terrorism and in what ways. Given the outbreak of war Mexico will have to take positions based on strategic considerations.

Just as with this question, most political, economic and social affairs are determined by supra-national actors and interests. In our “Politics” section, we include an article by legal expert Luis T. Díaz Müller about the transformations in ideas about human rights in a world immersed in an on-going process of globalization.

Almost a year has passed since the change in the federal government in Mexico. Our “Politics” section also presents an article by analyst Ricardo Becerra about the first nine months of the new administration on the occasion of the first annual address to the nation of a president who is not a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party. Has Fox’s presidency lived up to the expectations for change he created in the public? While Becerra does say it is early days yet for an objective balance sheet about the achievements and mistakes of the new administration, he postulates that it has not really assimilated the significance of the new democratic conditions and a divided government, leading to a certain degree of paralysis in the government and a slow-down of important reforms needed for the consolidation of democracy.

We have dedicated our “Economy” section precisely to one of the matters pending with regard to the reform of the state: we have included two contributions by Mexican economists about the much-talked-about fiscal reform. For Enrique Pino, while Fox’s proposal recognizes and presents solutions for one of the Mexican fiscal system’s main historic problems, low revenues, it also has a serious defect because it does not propose a structural, inclusive transformation that would deal with, for example, the immense backlog of bank tax debt. He also catalogues the proposed reform as inequitable because it includes exemptions and tax breaks for the low- and high-income groups, in detriment to a broad sector of middle-class taxpayers. Francisco Sevilla thinks that the proposal’s main deficiency is that it does not include a clear way forward to increasing the tax base, incorporating measures, for example, to include people in the informal economy once and for all. This, he says, will mean that a very small tax base will continue to shoulder most fiscal responsibility.

We continue with an analysis of the emergence of new political actors in North America. In “Society”, Hernán Yañes talks about the new dynamics of organized civil society in the Greater Caribbean, where one of its main actions has been to build transnational networks of nongovernmental organizations in order to try to have a more effective impact on the processes of globalization and regionalization. The same section includes an article by Celia Falomir about women and AIDS from the perspective of gender equity. She shows how in Mexico there is a trend toward feminization of the disease, which she attributes to women’s social and psychological vulnerability in our society, both of which increase their risks exponentially.

Our “History” section continues in the examination of the role of social actors with an illustrative article by Javier Torres Parés, who writes about international solidarity and coordination of struggles in the past and today among union and social movements in the United States and Mexico.

In “Canadian Issues”, Canada’s ambassador to Mexico, Keith H. Christie, visualizes an optimistic future for relations between our two nations, especially because of the new dynamic created by NAFTA and Mexico’s new democratic political life, particularly given the unusual emphasis put on relations with Canada by President Fox.

Once again, we have dedicated most of our cultural sections to the state of Guanajuato, one of the country’s richest regions artistically, culturally and historically. In “Art, Science and Culture” we present the work of two of the state’s most important visual artists, recognized nationally and internationally. Jesús Gallardo is one of the country’s most important engravers and landscapers whose nationalism evidence a particular vision of “Mexican-ness.” Jesús Martínez, for his part, is recognized as one of Mexico’s most cre-

ative painters in the fields of innovation and artistic experimentation. The section continues with an interesting article by Fabiola García about the work of Carl Nebel, perhaps the most important U.S. artist to depict the entry of U.S. troops into Mexico City in 1847. As García explains, however, regardless of its artistic merit, Nebel's vision, depicted in most of his lithographs, did not reflect the real atmosphere and events as they occurred. We also offer our readers a stimulating piece about what may be the most important and ambitious binational scientific project carried out by Mexico and the United States in the history of science in our country. Astronomer Alfonso Serrano writes about the work on the large millimeter telescope currently under construction in Mexico with the participation of many academic, scientific and public institutions from both nations. We close this section with an article by journalist Alejandro Acevedo about Mexican rock music at the beginning of the millennium; he explains how it has grown over recent years and transcended our borders to have an impact internationally.

The sections "Splendor of Mexico," "Museums" and "Ecology" are completely dedicated to Guanajuato. We begin with an article about the splendid colonial city of San Miguel de Allende, rich in history and tradition. Historian Beatriz Cervantes writes about indigenous fiestas and traditions—specifically those of the Otomí culture—and their decisive contribution to the city's cultural dynamism. Luis Serrano contributes an interesting piece about mining history, which has decisively marked the state. We also include a photographic sampling of Guanajuato's vast body of folk art, recognized both throughout Mexico and abroad. We offer a small piece by architect Arturo Joel Padilla Córdova on state government efforts to restore monuments that are examples of colonial religious architecture, in this case the Friar Juan de Sahagún Ex-monastery in Salamanca, Guanajuato. Another contribution reviews the Friar Bernardo Padilla Museum in the Acámbaro region, an example of widespread community cultural activity, which exhibits very different artistic pieces giving the visitor a glimpse of the history and grandeur of the local culture. Biologists Soledad Vázquez, Juan Frías, Víctor Olalde and Gerardo Vázquez write about the social and environmental importance of the mesquite tree, not only one of the states's natural symbols, but also very important to region's economy, society and ecosystems.

In our "Literature" section, we anticipate the national homage that will most certainly be carried out next year on the occasion of the seventieth birthday of Juan García Ponce, one of the twentieth century's most important and influential representatives of Mexican letters. In this issue, we present our readers with his short story "El gato" (The Cat), undoubtedly a paradigmatic work which has made its influence felt not only in Mexican narrative, but in other national cultural manifestations, like film. We accompany the short story with a penetrating essay by the young critic and writer Juan Antonio Rosado, who discusses García Ponce's indisputable contributions to universal erotic literature.

In this issue, we also pay homage to Mexican poet Manuel Ulacia in our "In Memoriam" section in an article by Adolfo Castañón. Ulacia, known for both his profound work and his ever energetic activities in Mexico's community of writers, which led him to preside over the Mexican chapter of the P.E.N. club, died tragically last August at the height of his creativity and in the most mature stage of his literary production.

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