

OUR VOICE

During the first four-month period of 2014, Mexico's foreign policy agenda was crisscrossed with several particularly significant events. Among them were the twentieth anniversary of NAFTA coming into effect, the commemoration of seven decades of diplomatic relations with Canada, and Mexico's hosting of the North American Leaders' Summit.

Undoubtedly, all this caught the attention of the national media and public opinion, and in the background was the fact that on Mexico's domestic political scene, enormously important debates were already taking place in light of the reforms President Enrique Peña Nieto promoted in strategic spheres like education, telecommunications, politics, and energy.

While the central objective of all these reforms was to make a structural turn that would change not only laws but institutions, we will only be able to measure their efficacy in light of their implementation in the medium term.

This issue of *Voices of Mexico* brings our readers two magnificent analyses of the transcendent sides of the energy and political reforms. The experts' central arguments in dealing with the former are based on the constitutional changes that open up the country's hydrocarbon and electricity sectors to foreign capital and their consideration that the people of Mexico will be dispossessed of its energy resources. The article on the political reform, for its part, explains the changes in an electoral model that differentiated between the local and the federal, moving toward a more fully coordinated, national way of operating. In order to head this up, the national body in charge of elections has been transformed into the National Electoral Institute (INE).

For obvious reasons, our readers will note the profusion of articles in this issue about Canada or the links between Canada and Mexico. The mosaic of contributions selected by no means concentrates only on the history of our diplomacy, but rather includes the most up-to-date critical takes on Canada's political and social affairs, as well as issues like the common challenges both nations face such as migration and cultural diplomacy.

In my opinion, the relationship between Canada and Mexico will only become more profound as new generations multiply their interaction as the formula for understanding the "other," since our relations continue to be framed by the oscillating interests of the business community and political rhetoric.

Intensifying bilateral relations with Canada also will have to take into account the need to change our own image, as can be concluded from an article dealing with crime, drugs, insecurity, and violence, including that perpetrated against Canadians in Mexico, and how these topics take up 50 percent of the column space in several Canadian newspapers.

Different Mexican academic voices can be heard in this issue's "Special Section" about the conservative *Zeitgeist* in Canada, under the direction of Prime Minister Harper.

One outstanding characteristic of this are the significant changes that attempt to counter the effects of the economic crisis, but at the same time distance Canada from the principles that made it a haven for refugees and immigrants who sought better opportunities, as well as its defense of the environment and multilateralism.

Another article denounces the blow to Canadian studies, traditionally anchored in the cultural diplomacy that Canada's government successfully promoted as a pillar of its foreign policy. This soft power instrument unswervingly managed to project the diversity and richness of Canada's society and culture, and above all, position its image as a nation centered on the values of peace, order, and good government.

Yet another text conducts an interesting review of the situation of organized workers in Canada. From there, the reader can extrapolate a comparison with the United States and Mexico, which shows that Canada continues to head the group as the one that creates the greatest facilities for free unionization, countered by Human Development Index indicators, which situate it in frank decline regarding social well-being.

This is the place to invite our readers to peruse the articles that transport us to pleasurable, gratifying aspects of our reality. Women are today protagonists in the famous Mexican tradition of *charrería*, now a family pastime; with their relatively recent incorporation into the activity, they are able to display their perfect showmanship.

"We shall all disappear," is the iconic phrase on the first page of the article describing the festivity of the day of the dead that has traveled from Mexico to San Francisco, California. One of the richest pieces of baggage that our emigrants take into an increasingly globalized world consists of their ancestral traditions and the vocation to preserve them, even when forced to adapt them to new surroundings. Clinging to their primary identity through tradition is not only a mechanism to deal with vicissitudes, but also a series of elements to share in the web of multiple touching cultures.

One of *Voices of Mexico's* aims is that readers unfamiliar with our country are tempted to get to know it. So, we bring you the reasons why we Mexicans miss our great writer José Emilio Pacheco. We also invite you to one museum worthy of a visit: the Museum of Memory and Tolerance, where you will encounter the pending issues we still have *vis-à-vis* Mexico's minority groups.

I have intentionally left until the end the testimonies of migrant children presented in this issue, and I have done it taking into consideration their message. Including their voices, but above all, paying attention to them, is a permanent task for all generations of adults. In these short lives, violence, mistreatment, abandonment, poverty and fear stand out, shaking our consciences and forcing us to close ranks in search of solutions that prevent these tragedies from being repeated. Let's hope that can be accomplished.

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