

1.– World

Even before, but more often than not ever since the beginning of the present global economic crisis, the world media have focused their attention on the role that “emerging economic powers” or “newly industrialized countries” have to play in the various issues confronting the international community. Years after the end of the Cold War, a new era is opening up under their influence. As N. Jarayam states at the beginning of the following article: “While the People’s Republic of China celebrated sixty years of existence in 2009, neighbouring India, with an equally huge population, began its sixty-second year as an independent country.” Taking into account such an occurrence, this section presents two contrastive views on the “peaceful rise of India”. The first, already quoted, is that of an insider, well placed to analyse the strength and weaknesses of his homeland. Seeing through the progress of democracy, exemplified by the recent fifteenth parliamentary elections, and the “steady growth” of the economy, he does not ignore what he calls the “backlash of the exploited”, the large majority of the country for which he sees, in his very human conclusion, “some hope, much despair”. On a different tone, writing from China, the views of two outsiders follow: Shi Yinhong and Song Dexing, both professors of international relations in prestigious universities, develop how they understand the rise of India since the nineteenth century. They focus on the driving strategy that the leaders of India have used to make the best of the constraints present in the nation’s predicament and the effects that India’s rise will have on international world politics.

2.– Society

It is every one’s experience that in time of crisis, individual personalities reveal differently their strength and their weaknesses. There should not be any surprise if similar revelations would occur at the collective level of societies and nations. The present world predicament is undoubtedly a time of crisis and carries in its development various challenges for leaders and citizens alike. The following articles present two different but converging points of view on the effects of these “critical” times for China. In the first, Michael Anti, renowned Chinese journalist, accompanies his analysis with the narration of a case in order to describe the present situation of China’s millions of jobless migrant workers. Most of them, like Zhang, a boy of a village in Sichuan, are new comers in the job markets and have left their provinces for a far away factory, in this case in Guangdong. Then the economic downturn stroke hard, shutting down many workplaces, etc. What to do next? Zhang is asking for himself. With this question in mind, the reading of the second article leads to a deeper level of reflection. As the author, Sun Liping, from Tsing Hua University, writes in his blog, the turmoil that threatens more often than not, here and there, the stability of the Chinese society, is not at the root of its problems. The root is “social decay” and he explains why it is more threatening.

3.– Arts and Letters

Arts and letters are essential sources of relief and inspiration amidst the hassles of history, particularly in a time of crisis as are present years. That is why, at the crossing between 2009 and 2010, letters and music lovers would perhaps appreciate to commemorate some world great artists of the past. Contributions of this section offer ways of doing so: in 2009, the 210th anniversary of Aleksandr Sergeyevich Pushkin (1799–1837), considered by many as the greatest Russian poet and the founder of modern Russian literature; in 2010, the 150th anniversary of Anton Chekhov (1860–1904), a Russian short-story author and playwright considered to be one of the greatest short-story writers in the history of world literature; and also the 200th anniversary of the birth of Frédéric François Chopin (1st March 1810 – 17 October 1849), a Polish composer and virtuoso pianist, of world fame, one of the great masters of Romantic Western music. In the following articles, two arts lovers share with the reader their appreciation: first, Tudor Vladescu, of the Inter-university Institute of Macau, crosses over time and space and stretches Macau’s melancholy as if Pushkin’s and Chekhov’s had been able to express it in their poems or stories. Then, Luca Uggias, an Italian composer and pianist from Padua, leads the reader into discovering Chopin’s genius: he was an innovator.

4.– History and Culture

Beyond what makes headlines in the world news, age old issues still remain hot topics in the unending human quest for meaning. Contemporary culture is no exception, except that new information technologies leave these issues somehow buried under the hectic succession of events or in the shadow of a long lingering crisis as in recent years. In China as in the West, there has always been some tension between the legacies of tradition and the calls for progress. The contributions of this section offer two instances of different nature. In the first, John Moffat, Catholic Chaplain at the University of Oxford, grounds his reflexions on the conversations he had with three scientists. He explores the state of the dialogue between Christian faith and contemporary science, including human sciences, and shows how beneficial it is for both to deepen the use of “reason”, the Logos so dear to Biblical traditions. On a quite different background, Nicholas G. Carr, renowned author in the debate surrounding the use of Internet world wide, analyses what hidden influence the search engines available on the Net, like Google, might have on the human way of thinking and the consequences of it. If the risk is to imitate artificial intelligence, as

some informatician conceptors would like to achieve, can we dispense with the quest for meaning? A contemporary question.

5.– Thought and Humanism

Right at the beginning of this year 2010, fifty years will have passed since Albert Camus died in a car accident in the middle of the night, January 4th 1960. He was only 46 years old. The occurrence of his death would have been reported as many other ones: a unfortunate event, were it not for the exceptional influence the victim had at that time. But a tragic irony laid hidden in this meaningless death. Had he not written in *The Myth of Sisyphus*: “What is called a reason to live for is at the same time an excellent reason to die for.” Albert Camus had many times refused to be associated with the main streams of existentialism of his epoch. As a matter of fact, in many of his writings he struggled to overcome the “absurd” paradoxes of human life. From this point of view, in the first contribution of this section, Niu Jingfan, from Shanghai University, commemorates Albert Camus’s lasting influence in China. Her article is followed by a conversation between Albert Camus and his friend Howard Mumma, a Methodist pastor, who relates it. Both had met in a spiritual quest during several summers in Paris in the 1950s.

6.– Debates and Features

Occasionally, world media may mention the urban development of the city of Macau, but it is neither for the role it may “play” on the world stage or for the historical importance it had had in the age of the circumnavigations around the world. It is a matter of fact that the speed of this development does not go without any latent tension between the local preservation of the “world heritage”, recently homologated, and the intense competition between numerous new and not so new casinos and the “facilities” they offer to greed. Two contrasted articles in this section try to deal with the problems at stake. Vincent Ho Wai-kit, of the University of Macau, gives details on the past efforts and present achievements in the fields of restoration and continued maintenance of many historical places and old buildings in the former Portuguese enclave. Known by many poets, writers and artists, the “melancholy” of Macau has not really been changed by recent turbulences in the banking world. It is therefore fitting that the second contribution be a sobering presentation, by Raoul Gonzalez, S.J., from the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (Caracas), of “Twenty Proposals for Reforming Capitalism”, a book recently published in Paris.

Two Profiles

José I. Duarte is a Macau-based economist. He holds a degree in Economics by the University of Coimbra, Portugal, and a Master of Science degree in Environmental Economics, by the Imperial College, UK. He’s a university lecturer in economics and public policy subjects and a regular collaborator to the media on Macau’s economic and political issues.

Tudor Vlădescu completed his undergraduate studies in philology at the Faculty of Letters in Bucharest, followed by a master’s degree in contemporary Romanian literature and a teaching scholarship in the UK. While preparing his doctoral thesis on the subject of the use of fear in propaganda fictional texts, he graduated with a master’s degree in cultural anthropology and community development at the National School of Political Sciences in Bucharest. He has been a member of the International Association for Comparative Literature since 2002. Upon completion of his doctoral thesis, he became interested in research that could bridge the gaps between literature, anthropology, social psychology and other frontier disciplines in the field of humanities.