

what happens after the supplements run out. But the authors are hopeful. So far, the gains in “fulltime employment and earnings and [the]

reductions in poverty . . . are among the largest ever seen in a social experiment designed to encourage welfare recipients to work.”

Beijing Cool

Among Chinese opinion-leaders today, there’s a surprising new vogue, reports Liu Junning of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in *Cato Policy Report* (Nov.–Dec. 1999).

Liberalism is enjoying a rebirth in China’s intellectual circles. . . . Even the prime minister of China has [Friedrich] Hayek’s works on his bookshelf. . . .

The old ideology has failed, and the attendant “right to rule” has lost almost all of its “true believers.” Some observers may wonder how liberalism will be able to sprout and grow in Red China. The answer lies in the market economy or, as Adam Smith called it, “the system of natural liberty.”

Market mechanisms in China promote not only greater economic freedom but other freedoms as well, such as freedom of speech. Ever since the Chinese government stopped giving subsidies to most newspapers, magazines, and TV stations after the introduction of market-oriented reforms, the media have been publishing things to keep the interest of their readers. Since more and more people in China are interested in liberal ideas, the editors have been very enthusiastic in meeting the demand, despite harassment and threats of censorship. Some of them started to stop censoring themselves—not just for economic survival but also because many of them are becoming genuinely attracted to liberalism. Now it is the editors who are pushing the intellectuals. In China the only effective way to stop the trend of liberalization is for the government to resume media subsidies, which it now lacks the means to do.

The political culture of China is shifting in a liberal direction. Gone are the days when you could be proud to be a leftist. Now intellectuals prefer to be identified with liberalism. In today’s China almost all of the opinion leaders and celebrities in leading fields are liberals.

Latin Democracy’s Struggle

“Is Latin America Doomed to Failure?” by Peter Hakim, in *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1999–2000), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1779 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The January coup in Ecuador was only the latest indication that Latin America is not living up to the high hopes entertained by democrats and free-market enthusiasts a decade ago. “Across the continent, democracy and markets remain on trial,” writes Hakim, president of the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington-based organization.

There had been good reason for the high hopes, he notes. Between 1978 and 1990, some 15 Latin American countries turned away from dictatorship and began holding elections. And in the late 1980s and early 1990s, nearly all governments in the region came to adopt free-market economic policies.

The average rate of inflation soon plummeted, from more than 450 percent to hardly more than 10 percent today. “Almost overnight, Latin America joined the world economy.”

But meaningful economic growth, Hakim notes, has proved elusive, with the annual rate averaging less than three percent during the 1990s. That was better than the 1.9 percent average of the 1980s, but a far cry from the six percent of the 1960s and ’70s. Of 20 Latin American countries, only three—Argentina, Chile, and Peru—averaged five percent or higher annual growth during the 1990s, though three others—the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Panama—came close.

Mediocre economic performance is only part of the problem, Hakim says. Few of the democratic governments “are governing well.” In most countries, basic democratic institutions—courts, legislatures, political parties, even the presidency—are weak, and in some cases, “barely work at all.” Education is neglected: Only one in three Latin American children attends secondary school. Virtually every city “is far more violent and dangerous than it was a dozen years ago,” Hakim says. The region’s homicide rate—300 murders per one million people—is twice the world average. In Guatemala, Colombia, and El Salvador, the murder rates exceed 1,000 per million.

Tired of all this, “ordinary citizens are losing faith in democracy,” Hakim writes. In Latinobarómetro surveys conducted in South America and Mexico in 1997 and 1998, more than 60 percent expressed dissatisfaction with democracy, and nearly one in three indicated that they favored or did not oppose authoritarian rule. Peruvians and Venezuelans already have turned to more authoritarian leadership.

The Latin American picture is not all bleak, Hakim notes. Chile in the last decade

has achieved six percent annual growth, slashed the poverty rate, and improved government services, and its democratic institutions “are growing stronger and more effective.” Argentina [which last October elected a nominal socialist, Fernando de la Ruá of the centrist Radical Party, president] also “has made impressive economic and political advances since democratic rule was restored in 1983,” Hakim says. Uruguay and Costa Rica have strong democratic heritages. Mexico’s economic prospects are good, though its political ones are hindered by its inexperience with democracy, deep political divisions, and extensive drug traffic, criminal violence, and corruption. Brazil, with almost one-third of Latin America’s population and economic activity, “is the wild card,” Hakim says, with much depending on “the political skills and luck” of President Fernando Cardoso and his advisers.

Hakim is moderately hopeful. He expects that most of Latin America “will avoid disaster. . . . Most of the region’s political leaders and financial managers are betting on democratic politics and market economics and are struggling to make them work.”

A Swedish Imperfection

“Gender Equality in ‘the Most Equal Country in the World’? Money and Marriage in Sweden” by Charlott Nyman, in *The Sociological Review* (Nov. 1999), Keele Univ., Keele, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG, England.

In Sweden, where equality between the sexes is the official ideal, husband and wife are obliged by law to “share” their incomes, with each having a legal right to the same standard of living as the other. Yet after interviews with 10 married couples, Nyman, a doctoral student in sociology at Umeo University, in northern Sweden, is persuaded that even in what is supposedly “the most equal country in the world,” perfect equality remains elusive.

The couples, each with dual incomes and a seven-year-old child, lived in an unidentified white-collar town. All the husbands and wives initially insisted in interviews that they not only believed in equal economic sharing but practiced it.

Yet in all 10 families, Nyman found, “the woman had primary responsibility” for buy-

ing groceries, clothes for the children, and other everyday items for the home, while the men usually handled such “bigger” matters as bank loans and kept track of long-term investments and savings. Because the women had the daily burden of making ends meet, says Nyman, they often wound up drawing on their personal budgets to meet unanticipated family needs, worrying more than their husbands about the family having enough money, and spending less on themselves than their husbands did.

Though the women “seemed to subordinate their own needs to those of other family members,” Nyman notes, they saw their behavior not as “sacrifice” but as “an expression of love.” Comments Nyman: Even in Sweden, “old traditions, attitudes, and behaviors die hard.”