

Welcome to PortVitoria!

Welcome to PortVitoria, a Big Picture magazine providing reviews and informed articles on a wide range of topics for the worldwide Lusophono and Hispanic language communities. The planning for PortVitoria started before I registered the domain with I&I four years ago. In the various blue prints that the process required one thing did not change: the idea that *PortVitoria* should be a space for Lusophono and Hispanic writers.

The idea that well informed individuals make the best citizens is widely recognised in the democratic world. However, many issues which are highly relevant to society are so complex that the discussions around them are mostly restricted to the academic journals. Good reviews of the relevant topics would allow laypersons to grasp the big picture and to become better informed. The writer of reviews need not be an expert but simply someone with the skills to digest a complex topic and to write a clear summary of it.

PortVitoria's mission is to be a global medium for the Portuguese and Hispanic cultures worldwide, providing relevant, objective and unbiased information on a wide range of topics such as language, literature, history, geography, political science and science & technology.

In this first issue the article by the American geographer, historian and linguist Norman Berdichevsky provides a different and quite interesting insight on the 'rediscovery' of America, where he ponders on the possibility that the voyage of Christopher Columbus was in fact a mission of espionage by the Portuguese and the Danish, whose alliance goes back to the time when Don Pedro, brother of Prince Henry the Navigator, fought alongside the Danish king Erik VII and visited him in 1426. According to Berdichevsky, the other motive of the Danish-Portuguese cooperation was the sibling nations' rivalry that took place in the two peninsulas that guard the entrance of Europe: Portugal with Spain and Denmark with Sweden.

There are still two other special contributions for the present issue. One is an illustrated article on the history of the English language by Ricardo Schütz, reprinted from the internet site *English Made in Brazil* (www.sk.com.br). The other is an article commemorating the 50 years since the death of Gabriela Mistral, the Chilean poet and Nobel laureate who died on 10 January 1957, reprinted from the Chilean e-magazine Critica.cl. We are grateful to Norman Berdichevsky, Ricardo Schütz and Ricardo Cuadros for their contributions.

We hope that PortVitoria will be a useful resource to secondary teachers, learners of foreign languages, cultural tourists and anyone with an inquisitive mind. In subsequent issues we will address wider concerns than those presented in this first issue.

Joaquina Pires-O'Brien - July 2010