

Mexico Bleeds

Free media against the invisible tyranny

Mexico is bleeding. Along with the so-called “war against drug-dealers” we see the whole Mexican territory turn olive green. The militarization is part of the global war driven by the United States, which began with the 9-11 events and created new enemies: terrorism and drug trafficking. Attuned with the Lords of the north, the Mexican government has launched its own war creating a police-ruled state and criminalizing social protest.

The militarization leads to social-control practices which have nothing to envy from those used by the dictatorships of the 70's: from video cameras to torture chambers, *via* disappearances and massacres, the regime uses all its resources to establish new conditions for slavery. In addition to the barbarism of the beheaded, the “wrapped” (*encobijados*), those cooked in soup (“*pozoleados*”) and other expressions of savagery which the media use to feed the social fear, we find the technology of electronic espionage (phones and internet) as well as the offers for mercenary imports which “will accomplish” the extermination of the criminals. This is how fear and silence appear as the “magical recipes” (extracted from the manuals for psychological warfare) for habituating the media to censoring itself, managing to also desensitize the population towards state and paramilitary-driven violence against social movements.

It might sound exaggerated to talk about “new slavery”, but it is the wager of those in power: the big national and foreign businessmen, the US government and the Mexican promoters of neo-liberalism are determined to take down every obstacle which prevents them from increasing their profit and their control over the country. It's all about taking over the natural wealth of the country and exploiting the Mexican workers even more. There are examples to spare. Let's take a look at the extent of the landlord, boss and politician offensive against the whole population:

1. Militarization. Albeit there has never been a “Rule of Law” in Mexico, today we see the armed forces applying the “Rule of the Strongest” throughout the whole country. The army and its blue version, the federal police, are already the only pillar holding up the neoliberal project in Mexico. The sinking of key institutions such as the Powers of the Union and the education and public health systems, together with the intense economical crisis unleashed in 2008, have lead to the “heavy hand” as the one and only proposal from the politicians, irrespectively of their political inclinations *eg.* Felipe Calderón, Enrique Peña Nieto and Marcelo Ebrard. From Chihuahua to Chiapas, from the “News Divine” to San Juan Copala, the military boots occupy, pester, torture and kill the people living in the territories they are looking to control. The supposed “combat against drug trafficking” is the excuse for entering states like Michoacán, Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas and criminalizing social movements that try to defend their territories, by labeling them as “guerrilla cover-ups” and through this, justify the imposition of the “Law of the club”.

2. Extinction of social rights. As a byproduct of the unfinished 1910 revolution, Mexico has minimum limits to avoid the exploitation of workers and the giving away of the country to foreigners. These are the last obstacles that the present offense is trying to remove. It's trying to stop us from speaking of the catastrophic situation of the national education, the electrical power service, the

devastation of the Mexican farmlands or about the privatization of water and all the rights which are being destroyed after decades of fighting to establish them. No one forgets that the Zapatista uprising was the result of the counter reform to the 27th article of the Constitution. Today we are living through the privatization of the electrical energy system by the liquidation of the state owned companies and the brutal and illegal blow against the Mexican Union of Electricians (SME). Along with this, we see a growing transgenic threat endangering our native seeds. Education is suffering from budget asphyxiation represented by the drama of millions of youths who can't find work nor available places in schools. Nothing better can be said about social security, since pensions have entered the game of financial speculation through the AFORES and both hospitals and clinics are being dismantled and have to endure the daily lack of medicines and other resources. To top it all, on April 2010, the right winged party, the PAN, proposed a counter reform to the Federal Labor Law which intends to destroy the basic rights of the workers such as the collective bargaining agreement, labor stability, length of the work day and even the basic right to receive payment for working.

3. Giving away of the country to big money owners. The ongoing war has one main objective: to have the great money owners exploit the abundant wealth of the country. Who is benefited by the Monsanto Law and the permits to grow genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Mexican land? The answer is no secret: Monsanto, Cargill, Syngenta, *etc.* Who gets profit from the extinction of "Luz y Fuerza"? Iberdrola, AES, Mitubishi, *etc.* And we could go on the same way referring to the mining industry, wind energy, infrastructure, the financial sector, *etc.*, where multinationals from all around the world are benefited from the open attitude of Felipe Calderon's presidency to "attract investors". A special mention must be given to the "national barons" lead by Carlos Slim, who have managed to take over an important "slice of the cake". The fact that Slim is the richest man in the world shouldn't obscure the millionaire deals of the Zambranos (owners of CEMEX), the Azcárragas (owners of Televisa), the Hernández (owners of Maseca) and *tutti gli altri*. While this bunch of thieves pays for their royal-style of life, 50 million Mexicans live in poverty and hundreds of thousands migrate north in search for a better life, only to find death in the hands of the border patrol (*the migra*), the desert or the migrant hunters.

4. Gringos to the rescue. Like never before, Felipe Calderon's government has abandoned the country to the hands of the United States government and army. Mexico is becoming an American protectorate. The crucial decisions are tutored by our "generous" neighbors which freehandedly give away dollars and weapons, increasing their influence on the reality of the country. In 2010 only, the joint execution of military maneuvers, the visit of a military delegation lead by the Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton and the order to remove the army from *Ciudad Juárez*, issued by the Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, are three examples of who is in control of the country. The Mexican government has completely subdued itself to the demands of the *gringos* which can be synthesized in the "Mérida Initiative" and the recent intentions to implement a Mexican version of the "Colombia Plan". The military aid (weapons, resources, training) will be complemented with the direct action of US soldiers and mercenaries in our country, enjoying of course, of full impunity.

Facing this scenario, the mass misinforming media play a key role. It's never excessive to be reminded of the participation of the commercial media in numerous destabilizing campaigns in

many parts of the world, for example "El Mercurio" in Chile working against Salvador Allende's government, "The Daily Gleaner" in Jamaica against Michael Manley's government, "La Prensa" in Nicaragua against the Sandinistas, the right winged media in Venezuela against Hugo Chávez's government and the TV networks in Honduras against Manuel Zelaya's government. The "coverage" of the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq deserve special mention since it demonstrates the propagandistic operation with which the great misinforming networks of the United States, specially Fox News, dedicated themselves to "create the enemy" which Baby Bush needed to justify sticking his finger in the Middle East. In the same manner, the "Inter-American Press Society (SIP)" and the "National Endowment for Democracy (NED)" are media-intervention instruments for the CIA in Latin America. These are all examples of the central role of the media in the social domination scheme that we presently suffer.

Mexico has worked as a first class laboratory to experiment with social control techniques through mass media. The *modus operandi* of these actors was formulated back in the days of Díaz Ordaz. In the National General Archive of Mexico, we can find an official government document of the 60's which states: "Through the action of political propaganda we can conceive of a world dominated by an invisible tyranny which adopts the form of a democratic government". These are nearly 50 year-old words which unfortunately haven't lost their validity. Conditioning and manipulation are the old but effective recipes used by the commercial media to keep us still and quiet while the country falls apart. And this control apparatus isn't limited to times of crisis, it functions over our daily life. Misinforming-mass media, model our lives through their messages: they dictate codes of behavior, they tell us what, when and how to do things, they establish hierarchies of the acceptable, of the "good" and the "bad", they elevate or bring down personalities, *etc.* In the field of social action, commercial media behave like mercenary armies at the service of the best bidder and as efficient guardians of the established order. The "strategic thinking" of mass media is guided by techniques to manipulate the so called "public opinion". It couldn't be any other way when we know that behind the presumed "objectivity" of communicators, lie the threads of power weaved into solid nets. For example, we have the owner of Microsoft, Bill Gates as an important stockholder of Televisa while Carlos Slim is one of the owners of The New York Times.

In the past 20 years, politicians and media owners have established a strategic alliance for mutual benefit: the control of the population by the media, which allows thieves and murderers to govern the country, is rewarded with governmental decisions which preserve the Televisa-TV Azteca hegemony over the whole country. While mass media portray themselves as the stage for democracy and diversity, a look at the owners of the radio and TV companies shows how a small bunch of actors control the communication of homogeneous messages which underpin social control.

The operating concessions for public TV are split between Televisa and TV Azteca, which in 2008 controlled 401 concessions representing a little over 87% of the total. This produces millionaire deals. In 2008, Televisa reported income for over 39 thousand million pesos (39 billion pesos, which was 70% of the income from public television) while TV Azteca received more than 9 thousand million pesos (9 billion pesos). The situation in the radio industry is pretty similar: Grupo ACIR controls 160 radio stations in 26 Mexican cities and Grupo Radio Centro has more than 100

stations. These two groups report having 50% of Monster City's (Mexico City) audience. What kind of diversity or objectivity can exist when the vast majority of radio and TV broadcasters are controlled by 4 companies? In these oligopoly conditions, communication turned into merchandise is malleable and sold to the best bidder.

Commercial media, particularly television, constitute the main "communication" link within the country. Historically, the Mexican State has focused on two things: leaving the communication spectrum in the hands of private businessmen and crushing any initiatives that spur from society in an attempt to break the media monopoly. Defying this monopoly is a crucial task to ensure the transformation of the country. This explains why free, associative, community media represent strategical players in social protest and action.

Recent history highlights the importance of free media. In 1994, the incipient networks built through the internet helped to stop the war against the EZLN (Zapatista Army for the National Liberation) and the indigenous communities in resistance. The spreading of the repressive actions in San Salvador Atenco and the tenacious resistance of the Oaxacan people in 2006 represented a qualitative leap for free media, which learned to open spaces for those who fight against capitalism and their governments. In May, when the commercial media was lynching the farmers from the *Frente de Pueblos en Defensa de la Tierra* (Peoples Front in Defense of the Land) from San Salvador Atenco, the free media opened a space for condemning the torture and violations suffered by the people arrested and transmitted the summonings for solidarity actions to support those detained. Soon after, in the summer and fall of 2006, the free and taken over media, played a fundamental role in the resistance of the people of Oaxaca: Radio Plantón, the station from the democratic teacher's union, Radio Universidad, which ended up being the last stronghold of the Oaxacan movement, the radio and TV stations taken over by the people, the work of free media like Indymedia Oaxaca and other such initiatives all allowed the people to efficiently fight off the lies of the mass media to the point where the resistance was only penetrated by the brutal intervention of the Preventive Federal Police (PFP).

In the present, when facing the decomposition of the regime and the militarization of the country, free media represent the only windows through which threads of reality can filter through the lies of governmental propaganda. When defying the media monopoly, free media strike at one of the pillars of social control in this country. This explains why they are harshly persecuted, particularly those who have a massive reach, such as radio stations.

It's true that free radio stations have payed a high price both in blood and demolished efforts by the action of the authorities. The hardening of the regime can also be noticed in this area. According to the Media Laws (which lack any article concerning free or community radios), broadcasting without permission is punishable with a fine and the confiscation of the broadcasting equipment. For decades, this is how the government acted, however, since 2007-2008, the Calderon administration has changed its strategy by using an illegal resource, to accuse those who transmit without permission of "damage to the national goods", a crime which is punished with 12 years in jail and a 50 thousand peso fine. At the moment, two comrades are subject to legal processes for being accused of this "original" crime: Rosa Cruz from the Purépecha community station Uekakua, which transmitted with 5 watts from Ocumicho, in Michoacán and Héctor

Camero, member of Radio Tierra y Libertad from Monterrey, Nuevo León.

With its severity, the legal machinery plays a secondary part in front of the interference, the murders and the physical aggressions against those who build free or community radio stations. In Oaxaca, Chiapas and Mexico City, the use of a more potent signal from another frequency to create interference, has been widely used by local or Federal authorities to try and silence the free and community radios, for example:

Radio Insurgente, which broadcasts for the EZLN, was interfered in Chenalhó.

Radio Plantón and Radio Universidad in Oaxaca City were interfered during the 2006 movement. Presently, Radio Plantón has to jump around different frequencies to avoid being interfered.

In Guerrero, Radio Ñomndaa has lost coverage due to the presence of a signal from Acapulco which prevents the "Words from the Water" from being heard in Ometepepec, the closest city to Xochistlahuaca.

In Monterrey City, Regeneración Radio (105.3 FM) and La Voz de Villa (91.7 FM) have been blocked by a transmission of esoteric messages and music, since 2009.

On occasion, the interference takes the form of a counter insurgent act as what happened in Cancún in 2003 during the protests against the OMC meeting, when a warship which was docked in the port, blocked all the unoccupied frequencies to avoid their use by free radios.

The Ké Huelga Radio has faced 4 interference actions during its 11 years of existence. In 1999 and in 2000 during the student strike, with the noise from a siren and presently with two signals, one from an "anonymous" station which transmits esoteric messages and music and the other from Radio Josna, a station associated to the PRI from the State of Mexico, which transmits from Ciudad Neza. As of June, both interference signals have stopped. However, we don't leave out the possibility of a repressive act from the State against the Ké Huelga or the return of the interference.

To interfere a radio signal which pursues no commercial interest, constitutes a clear negation to the universal right for freedom of speech.

The less frequent murders and physical aggressions, have also slammed the free media. Lets remember the painful murders of Felicitas Martínez and Teresa Bautista as examples. They were communicators for the Triqui people through the radio station "La Voz que Rompe el Silencio" and were brutally murdered in April 2008. The fellow communicators of Radio Ñomndaa have also suffered from imprisonment (David Valtierra in 2007), dismantling attempts (2008) and beatings (Obed Valtierra in 2009).

Maintaining a free communication project hasn't been easy in the face of the capitalist project which, through terror, military force and propagandistic lies intends to create a new paradise for the rich and their servants of the political caste. Hour radio station, the Ké Huelga Radio, born in the heat of the 1999 student strike against the privatization of education, has as its main vocation, the opening of a space for mass communication for people and organizations which fight to transform their lives. For 11 years we have interacted with hundreds of protest and resistance experiences

from Mexico and the World. Our continuance in the FM quadrant and in the internet has permitted many people to make use of the frequency and use it to communicate and amplify their thoughts and initiatives. This has been possible thanks to the appropriation of the necessary technologies for transmitting and the commitment of hundreds of people who have participated in the project during these 11 years.

Conceived as a space for communication and exchange the Ké Huelga has opened possibilities for dialog and encounter which question and defy two basic mechanisms of social control: miscommunication and media silence. At the "Ké", we experiment with a type of communication where those of us who talk through the microphones are by no means specialists and we believe that the practice of communicating only makes sense if those who listen break the passivity and share their words. This is clear in the case of social movements which find in our radio the means to communicate their demands and initiatives. In a more daily basis, the "Ké" allows different cultural, social, political and even individual expressions with "no time in the air", to have channels for mutual discovery and recognition. Where the commercial media finds "audience", we see comrades.

The "Ké Huelga" radio station is also a place where we learn to fight, to appropriate the knowledge that capitalism reserves only for its misinformation media and, above all, where we learn to establish contact with others that like us, try to change this world which is quickly disintegrating while threatening to reduce us to mere spectators of our own death.

Despite the advances that we've achieved, we presently find ourselves in a delicate situation; we are in the middle of a growing criminalization scheme against social movements and free medias. The defense and broadening of free spaces from those in power is everyone's responsibility. We invite you to participate in the defense of the Ké Huelga by having a program, contributing with the promotion of the project, collaborating with economical support by donating equipment or in any other way you find convenient.

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Ké Huelga Radio

libre, social y contra el poder

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