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The case of RCTV and the fictional democratization of communication

El Libertario editorial collective

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Since two decades ago, by means of our publications, the Venezuelan anarchists have denounced and been against the vices and slants of the private media corporations as RCTV. This company had guaranteed its economic success combining evil oligopolistic practices, opportunist bonds with the current state power and the emission of “garbage-content” with the excuse of “giving the people what they want”. However, the problems that indeed this company represented are taken now as an excuse for the imposition of a solution that means a repetition and multiplication of the same vices. In the 2007’s Venezuela, the meanness of a part of the private oligopoly is supposed to be corrected by the dreadful of a state monopoly, increasing the unprecedented insane advantages for the government and justifying the production of “garbage-content” with the condition of being “rojo-rojito” (red-small red)¹. In concrete terms:

¹ “red-small red” is a phrase used by the President Chávez and their people to describe the color of the socialist sign of their political movement

we do not have Miguel Ángel Rodríguez anymore but we will have the acclaimed Mario Silva, the presenter of the journalistic paradigm of the 5th Republic.

The history of Venezuelan television teaches that the private owners of the media have never recognized the right to freedom expression, particularly when this right affects their profits and its privileged political and cultural position. However, the State – before or after 1999 – has never made anything different in this field to understand the television to consider it as one for the exercise and defense of their power interests. For that reason, the little space that could have been constructed for free diffusion and discussion of ideas on the TV has been very weak because those who have the power in this field have always want it to be this way.

And if that wasn't enough, in the struggle unleashed after the coming of Chávez to the presidency for the control of the state and the consequent access to the oil rent, the governmental and oppositionist factions have compete equally in order to use opportunistically and tendentiously the mass media because this has been converted in a battlefield scenario where the recognition of the right to freedom of expression means to give in space to the enemy, within this perverse logic of polarization that we have suffered in the last times, in where those of us that dissent and criticize to the contenders of power had been equally detested and excluded for both sides.

However, despite all the nuances and warnings that are applicable to the Venezuelan case, the struggle for guaranteeing the little one that could be preserved in terms of freedom of expression today when several evidences lead to think that the main risk that faces up this freedom in the current situation comes from the state with its clear intention of creating a com-

with an emphasis using the expression “small red” to mean that is very or totally red.

ment ring acquired the form of the renewal of the dealership to Venevisión por 5 more years, that began to count the same day that the end of the signal of RCTV. Of course, to bother to any Chavista it is enough to remind them that it's been a short time while their faction fight against Venevisión and The Cisneros or to ask them for the cualitative differences between the both enterprises that justify the close of one and the prizing of the other one.

- The systematic application of a repressive policy against the dissenting communicational expressions is not stopped only in the issue of the dealerships to broadcast TV signals. It also exists the blackmail throughout the SENIAT with the collection of real or so-called fiscal insolvencies; the criminalization of the critique by means of the numerous judgments to journalists and media not so fair for the government and the arbitrary application of The Law of Social Accountability of Radio and Television that because it is not regulated, it is used arbitrarily by CONATEL –the corresponding organization- as a weapon against any journalist, program o station in order to make them to change their position.

revenge spirit can explain the things that happened to the rest of the private tv stations (with the exception of Globovisión, a savage criticist), where – for example – according to the report of observers of the EU about the distribution of the time at the TV regarding to the electoral presidential campaign, Venevisión gave 84% to the official candidate and 16% to the opposition, while at Televen the respective numbers were 68% and 32%; La Tele –channel 12- fired to the journalist Marietta Santana for criticizing in public the close of RCTV and the journalist Ana María Hernández resigned after the prohibition of denouncing the irregularities in the state oil corporation PDVSA; while the channel of music Puma TV was bought in 2004 by Wilmer Ruperti, a notorious “boli-bourgeois”, who wants to turn it into a news channel (the announced Canal 1).

- During more than 30 years, RCTV (of the corporative group 1BC or Phelps) and Venevisión (of the Cisneros group) formed the duopoly that imposed their bad and weird habits to the country’s television. This agreement had a economic rather than political character, and, in various occasions they were confronted each other and also with the current government. It can’t be compare with the economic and political monopoly in the hands of soldiers and selfish interests that we face today. After the Presidential Referendum of 2004, the pact was broken when the Cisneros group decided –for the good health of their businesses- that the best was to make peace with the government, operation legitimated in a meeting held in the main barracks of Caracas between Chávez and Gustavo Cisneros with Jimmy Carter as the mediator of appearance. And from that moment on begins a honey moon between the “twenty one century socialism” and this corporate gang, in which the engage-

municational model suit made to the size of a so-called “socialism” that is nothing more than the new face of the capitalistic domination in Venezuela. We have no doubts of that we have to be so naïve to believe in vociferating important figures of today like Granier of RCTV or Ravell of Globovisión (and that for not mentioning the today’s silent Armas Camero of Televen or Cisneros of Venevisión), but the measures taken against those figures will be prompt adopted against the rest of the dissidence of the country, including those within the governmental sector.

We have no doubt about the fact of that we suffer from a regime that is so opposed to any kind of critique or disagreement that they even proclaim as a virtue to repress any manifestation of this class between their adepts because they immediately discredit the legitimacy of the reactions of protest against the abuses of power and official incompetence attributing them to so-called criminal conspiracies (the “CIA”, the “Colombian paramilitary groups”, the “right that wants to give a coup d’état”, etc.) that would be behind any possible kind of dissidence in Venezuela. According to this paranoiac-Stalinist approach, the mere demand of rights is just the unquestionable proof of the evil conspiracies that threaten the “revolutionary process” and also for not to agree to or to repress to those who make that demand. Indeed, just from the authoritarian dogmatism that is characteristic of the Venezuelan government could be justified the aggression to those rights in the name of an absurd “socialism” that is proud to damage seriously to Granier but comes to an agreement with Cisneros, gives rights of property to multinationals and gives its protection to the brand-new “boli-bourgeoisie”².

Faced with that situation, we the Venezuelan anarchists could not do another thing that put ourselves firmly in the defense of the now mutilated right to free expression as so as of all the other social and political rights which are

² A word composed of “boli” of Bolivarian and “bourgeoisie”.

indispensable for the mere existence and rising of autonomous grass roots social movements. The faculty of communication, in the fullest and more human sense that has this word is –for us– a mean but also a goal in this proposal of a society of free and equal people that we want to come true. At the same time, we denounce the use of the current situation of confrontation to advance in the way of the criminalization of the dissidence and the structuring of a juridical ordination that are fit of a police state. In this way, the left wing authoritarian state is supporting measures (illegalization of the closes of ways and the burning of tires for example), that in a short term will be used against popular sectors that will demand claims. We also denounce the use of armed gangs to confront the demonstrators in the streets; a brand-new kind of paramilitary groups that serve to the Venezuelan state to copy the practice of its commercial partners: Álvaro Uribe and the North American multinationals. Finally, we will point out the clear relation between the Venezuelan government and sectors of the globalised economy such as Gustavo Cisneros, relation that wants to ensure precarious employment, the subordination and the servility of the entire male and female oppressed of our country.

Numbers and facts of the “democratization of the radioelectric spectrum” (that often are not to mention by the “Bolivarian socialism” and the “democratic opposition”):

- In 1999, the presence of the Venezuelan state in the radioelectric spectrum was demonstrated only through one TV channel (VTV) and two frequencies of the National Radio. Nowadays, they have at one’s disposal the direct control over 6 television stations (VTV, TVES; Vive TV, Telesur, Ávila TV and ANTV), plus 2 radio networks (Nacional and YVKE Mundial) with 8 radio stations. We have to add to the last thing said, the recently acquired control

over CANTV that is the biggest provider of support for telecommunications in the country.

- In the total ordinary budget of the Venezuelan State for the year 2007, it is supposed to assign 165,3 thousand millions bolivars (more than 77 million dollars) for the communications field, without talking about additional credits.
- According to the enterprise of measurements AGB, between February of 1999 and December of 2006, the government imposed the production of 1339 obligatory transmissions to the non-official radios and TV’s for a total of 810 hours, 56 minutes and 42 seconds. Those data do not include the hours of transmission of Alo Presidente.
- The movement to establish communitarian radios and TV’s that 10 years ago gave positive steps toward a model of autonomous alternative communication, has been subjugated by the power of the state throughout the economic control because, the majority of the 167 radio stations and 28 tv stations that nowadays work with the denomination of “communitarian” depend upon the government subsidies (according to the Asamblea Nacional, in 2006 they received 5,7 thousand millions bolivars, aprox. more than 2.650.000 dollars), and for that reason they tend to become official mouthpieces and to repeat the same communicational vices they question.
- According to the official mouthpiece Mari Pili Hernández, the hypothetic volume of businesses of RCTV for the year 2007 would be of 420 thousand millions bolivars (more than 195 million dollars). The promise of such a candy, together with the fear of confront the Chavista