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PEOPLE'S RADIO IN BOLIVIA : THE STRUGGLE OF WORKERS AND PEASANTS TO DEMOCRATIZE COMMUNICATION

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CONTENT

SUMMARY

Located in the middle of South America Bolivia is one of the countries of most ancient origin and strongest authochtonous culture in Latin America. Its large territory is very scarcely populated mostly by native Quechua and Aimara peasants, who occupy the lowest strata in the social and economic structure. Traditionally depending on the exportation of minerals, the country does not have a significant industrial base; thus it buys dear abroad and sells cheap. Deprived by a war of its access to the sea, and often afflicted by authoritarian rule, it has so far not been able to overcome its situation of acute underdevelopment and dependence.

Citizens of a republic since independence from Spain in 1825, Bolivians were able to start a true nation-building process only as late as in 1952, when a massive people's revolutionary movement overthrew a conservative military junta. Composed of Indian peasants, workers and mestizos, the party that took power nationalized the tin mines until then monopolized by private interests, established land reform to break the latifundia built on grabbing the Indians' lands, and made vote universal, to include the native peasants without the literacy condition, as well as women. This was the beginning of the effective search for democracy, social justice and modernity.

In the context of liberation of the masses from oppressive exploitation built by said revolution, workers unions and peasant leagues rapidly became influential enough to secure much political power. And it was this environment which made possible for them to successfully struggle to democratize communication without waiting for any theory to show them the road. This struggle, however, was not inspired by the governments, which -on the contrary- often inhibited, when not violently repressed, this insurgence. It was an autonomous people's initiative.

The spontaneous movement started apparently by the middle of the 40's in the heart of the tin producing districts of the country. A union of mining workers established in one of them a small radio station in 1952 and, within a decade, some 25 unions more did likewise elsewhere. In each case the little and primitively equipped stations were paid for through contributions of the union members and were self-managed. The miners turned broadcasters gave from start ample access to the microphones to everybody in their communities at no expense or effort. Thus the stations soon became powerful tools in the workers' struggle for a decent existence in a fair and democractic society.

Coincident in time was the gradual establishment of field stations sponsored by the Catholic Church. They were addressed to the peasant population initially with purposes of literacy-training and religious indoctrination. Soon, however, they evolved to catering to the multiple needs of people to attain rural development with social justice and cultural autonomy. And they did so by fostering the participation of peasants in communication in their own languages and no longer as passive audiences but as protagonists of the communication process in the country-side. The movement was consolidated through the establishment of ERBOL, a cooperative network of those educational institutions, operating accross the nation in the three major languages of it. With 17 affiliates and 25 years of experience, ERBOL is the largest and most complex organization of its kind in the region.

Also since early in the 50's peasants took yet another road to secure their until then neglected communication rights. They rented the "dead time" of urban commercial stations (5:00 to 6:30 or 7:00 a.m.) to introduce programs of their own and in their language. Thus for the first time in history peasants saw their life and

interest expressed through commercial mass media and received information about themselves, the country as a whole and the world. They also could listen to their own music, until then ignored by the radios. And for very small fees the peasant radio producers provide to their people in shanty towns and lonely villages, the equivalent to communication services until then denied to them: mail, telephone and telegraph. Neither meager profits nor disdain or represssion prevent these broadcasters of the early morning to keep performing their comendable and romantic role of helping their people overcome isolation and ignorance.

Finally a fourth format emerged just a few years ago: peasant union and peasant community broadcasting. This is taking place in a very few of the most remote Indian villages of the high Andes. They purchase and operate their rustic stations through modest contributions in cash or in agricultural products. Untrained but untyring, they are linking through radio's waves isolated small communities and giving them inspiration and guidance to overcome underdevelopment and oppression.

The establishment of an association of native broadcasters, the granting of university-level training to them and the insurgence of hundreds of voluntary amateur reporters to support the staff in the station, complete the extraordinary panorama of people's radio in Bolivia.

The search for democratizing social communication in Latin America goes back to the late 40's. Radio began to be used then in two countries of this region to cater to the needs of the lower strata of society, peasants and workers.

In Colombia the Catholic Church created "radiophonic schools" for small farmers, a combination of special broadcasts with guided small-group listening at community level. Out of the establishment of an elementary short-range station in the village of Sutatenza grew in little more than a decade what came to be the world' largest and most sophisticated system of non-formal education for rural development: Acción Cultural Popular (ACPO).* This outstanding Colombian experience inspired the establishment of similar broadcasting institutions in most countries of the region and they formed, as of 1972, the Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica (ALER), presently headquartered in Quito, Ecuador**.

The ACPO model was most broadly and firmly replicated in Bolivia with several adaptations. The Catholic Church fostered the establishment of over a dozen educational stations as of early in the 50's. This led to building, in 1967, Educación Radiofónica Boliviana (ERBOL), the region's largest and most active network of such stations, now operating across the whole country in Spanish as well as in the main native tongues of the country.

Also as of the early 50's two other comparable endeavours evolved in Bolivia as people's initiatives: the establishment of a network of stations funded and run by unions of miners and the introduction of programs for peasants produced by peasants in Aimara language in some of the commercial stations of La Paz. The present paper

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* A few of the numerous writings on ACPO/Sutatenza are those of: Ferrer (1951), Bernal (1967 and 1989), Beltrán (1968 and 1975), Musto (1971) and 1972) , (Brumberg (1972), Braun (1975) and Pareja (1982).

** For details about this organization see White (1983 and 1984).

deals essentially with these pioneering experiences of people's communication as well as with more recent peasant achievements in union and community radio in Bolivia.

BOLIVIA: LAND, PEOPLE AND PROBLEMS*

Bolivia is one of the countries of Latin America with most ancient origins and strongest authoctonous culture. Born as a republic on independence from Spain in 1825, it was formed with people coming mostly from pre-colonial native ancestry. Even today they constitute some 60% of the total population, the rest being a majority of mestizo people and small minority of whites.

Located in the middle of South America, Bolivia spreads today across 425,000 square miles of very high Andean plateaus, middle-level valleys and vast jungles and lowlands in the Amazon basin. This large territory is very thinly populated: only close to 6,350,000 inhabitants, 52% of which leave in cities and 42% in rural areas. Those in these latter are for the most part Quechua and Aimara peasants whose ancestors were in the land thousands of years before the Spanish conquerors arrived at it. Today, in the country as a whole, slightly more than one half of the population is monolingual: 44% speak Spanish only, 5% speak Quechua only and 2% speak Aimara only; another 2% corresponds to numerous languages of Tupí-Guaraní tribes of the jungles. The rest, 49%, is bilingual, with Quechua fairing somewhat better than Aimara in the combination with the language imposed by colonial rule.

The country's economy has traditionally been built around the export of minerals, mainly silver in the past century and tin in the present one. Tin production collapsed as of 1985, but other minerals still represent a third of all exports and natural gas has become the country's main earner of foreign income. Some alleviation is recently coming from non-traditional exports as wood, cattle, soya and sugar, along

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* Most figures in this section come from UNICEF (1990) and a few come from McFarren (1992) and from Grebe et. al. (1988).

with handicrafts. Exporting little at low prices and importing much at high prices, hardly industrialized at all, deprived of access to the sea shore in a war with Chile and often afflicted by authoritarian and incompetent rulers, Bolivia is one of the countries least developed and most dependent in the Latin American region.

Extreme poverty afflicts these days at least 40% of the population. Per capita income barely amounts to the equivalent of US$ 820. Beyond averages, however, income distribution is as skewed, as is traditional in Latin America, with the native "Indian" rural population getting the worst of the lot. The minimum monthly wage is equivalent to US$ 30 and unemployment is at 15%. Rescued from disaster as of 1985 through stern corrective measures, the Bolivian economy is presently recovered and stable. Inflation has been brought down from the highest to the lowest in Latin America. This, however, occurs at the price of suffering for the majorities strangled by low salaries and high prices.

Burdened by a huge foreign debt, the governments have not been able to substantially improve the social situation, which - on the contrary - is deteriorating in some aspects. About 90% of the urban homes have water whereas in the country-side somewhat less than a third of the homes count on them. The difference is far more acute in the case of sewage and garbage disposal services: slightly over 40% of the urban homes can enjoy them but only around 2% of rural homes have access to them. Likewise for medical services: there is one doctor for every 760 urban inhabitants but only one of them is available for every 20,000 rural dwellers. Only 22% of the people are covered by social security. Chronical malnutrition affects close to 30% of the urban population and near to 40% of the rural one. A third of the total population endures a daily calory in-take inferior to the minimum of 2,400 estimated by FAO indispensable for adults. Infant mortality and maternal mortality are among the highest in the region and the worst figures correspond, again, to mothers and children in the rural indigenous population. Life expectation is, on the national

average, 53 years for women and 51 for men. Indicators for education are no less dramatic. Illiteracy is at 37% on the national average but it reaches 53% in the rural areas and even higher figures if rural Indian women are singled out. Almost one third of children in primary school age and almost two thirds of them in high-school age have hardly access to schooling. And, among those who have it, desertion is frequent and grave for a number of causes hard to overcome.

THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

Liberated from Spanish domination after a war of 15 years, Bolivians expressed from the begining a clear inclination for democracy. Paradoxically, however, they have been ruled most often by ruthless military or civilians who have opted for autocracy in the interest of oligarchies. "... Independence did little for the people of Bolivia. Political control of the nation switched from one greedy group to another. The new Creole rulers lived lavishly from the profits of the vast, but ill-used, mineral wealth. Bolivia was a republic, but it was not a nation. Since its independence, there have been 77 governments, half of them elected democratically and the rest imposed through coupes. Weak governments made Bolivia vulnerable to the aggressive designs of neighbors. Several border disputes have dominated the nation's history, substracted one fourth of its territory, and left it a landlocked country" (McFarren, 1992, pg. 25).

One of the most tragic of those disputes was the Chaco War waged between Bolivia and Paraguay in 1932-35 with disastrous results for both but with Bolivia loosing in it 50,000 lives and 240,000 square kilometers. Bolivians of all kinds - white, Indian and mestizo - met face to face in the trenches with their reality. Out of that encounter were born full consciousness about the archaic and unfair nature of their society and the people's decision to get united to change it. After the war's end,

new political parties emerged on grass roots impulses and captured the people's solidarity to radically reorganize the country so as to let it become a real nation and a true democracy. This led the masses to performing, as of 1952, the "National Revolution", a process of deep transformation of the power structure in political, economic and cultural terms. The Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario took power by overthrowing and conservative military junta that had ignored its overwhelming triumph in elections. It readily nationalized the large tin mines which were at the axis of the country's economy, imposed land reform to redistribute latifundia built by depriving the peasants of their lands, and made vote universal, so as to include Indians and women in the electoral decision-making.

Since those days, the people of Bolivia have still had to fight many battles to secure genuine democracy and social justice. As of 1982, however, the democractic system appears firmly re-established and prevails so far one government after the next. The country has attained a healthy stability and regained respect. Peace and order, wanted by the great majority of Bolivians, have neither been defeated again by the Army nor affected by guerrilla warfare or terrorism. Furthermore, over the last two years or so, assisted by the U.S. government, the Bolivian government has made remarkable gains in curtailing the incidence of international cocaine delinquency in its territory, where coca leaves are produced for centuries.

It is in the light of all the above contextual elements that the Bolivian experience with people's radio, as a tool for democratizing communication, can best be assessed.

THE COMMUNICATION SITUATION

Emptiness and dislocation characterize most of the Bolivian territory. A marked insufficiency of population and a difficult geography determine the fragmentation and isolation of the people. Most of them leave in and around just three cities: La Paz

in the west, Cochabamba in the center and Santa Cruz in the east. The rest are scattered across the land in very small town formations isolated from each other as well as from the large urban conglomerates. Very large segments of the territory, especially in the tropical north and east, remain practically empty and all frontiers are also hardly populated.

As reported by Rivadeneira (1991) the country has only 1,538 kilometers of paved roads, 9,268 of stone roads and 30,168 kilometers of dirt roads, some of which are hardly practicable in the rainy season. The same source indicates that the total of railroads barelly exceeds 4,000 kilometers and that, out of the 38 airports operating, only two - those serving La Paz and Santa Cruz - meet the standars of international air navigation. On the other hand, almost two thirds of the total of homes in Bolivia are still lacking electricity. The urban deficit is of 37% and in the rural areas the shortage reaches 91%. There are barely 2 telephones for every 100 inhabitants in the country as a whole. In the cities there is one telephone for every 22 inhabitants, but in the rural areas there is one telephone for every 1,281 inhabitants, again an abismal difference disfavoring the peasantry. Postal and telegraphic services in rural areas, especially in the remote ones, are limitted and often inadequate. They exclude the non-Spanish speaking population partly due to its dispersion and partly to the fact that native peasants rarely have practicable addresses.

Circumstances as those just described make by themselves social communication very difficult in Bolivia and account to a significant extent for lack of national integration. But other factors add up to agravating the situation. One is the economic limitations affecting most of the population: except for the urban minority of upper levels of society, most people can nowadays hardly afford to spend much money in communications. Many urban dwellers have no money to spare at all in buying newspapers or magazines and even less so records or videotapes. And, given their extreme poverty, for peasants buying radio receivers or even batteries is

something costly. Here, moreover, operates another factor: cultural distances and language differences. With few exceptions, especially in the domain of print, mass media messages are transmitted only in Spanish although this is not the native tongue for 6 out of every 10 Bolivians. Furthermore these messages rarely ever reflect the Indian peasantry's existence or that of the numerous mestizos populating the suburbs, or cater to their needs, problems and interests.

As a consequence of the whole host of factors just mentioned mass media in Bolivia do not really reach the masses but, strictu sensu, rather just urban upper-level fractions of them. In fact the country has today 19 dailies, a rather large number for a small population, but their combined daily number of copies is deemed as low as 80,000. Even if it is assumed that probably three of four people read each copy, the size of audience reached allows to speak of the press as the most elitist of the media. Television reaches certainly far more people but still no more than a minority; in fact, Alfonzo (1990) estimated in only 400,000 the number of TV sets. As of 1984 State monopoly was de facto abolished and irrational and ilegal proliferation of commercial stations rapidly grew to unthinkable levels. By the last count (Contreras, 1992) there are as many as 72 television channels in the nation but analysts as Rivadeneira (1991) estimate that all combined they fail to reach more than a third of the total population. This is due to their low power - most operate in the range between 100 and 1,000 watts and thus their scope is purely local - and to the elementary nature of the equipment they are allowed to use. State television, thanks to repeater units and a satellite, has the most considerable nation-wide scope but nevertheless not a very large audience. As for motion pictures, although Bolivia is an international price-winning country in the area of documentaries, production is today minimal partly due to the very low number of film expectators caused by the invation of television, and movies houses are every day less.

Radio is the sole exception to the pattern, not only because it is the most pervasive medium of communication but because it especially reaches far more than all other media the lower strata of the population, including the native peasant, whose oral tradition it fits.

Started in 1929, radio expanded very rapidly and improved its quality as of the early 50's. It now counts on 1,200,000 sets and close to 300 transmitting stations. In contrast with the other media which are concentrated in the main cities, about one half of the radio stations are located in rural areas. Three fourths of them are in the highlands because population concentrates in them in practically the same proportion. This represent for Quechua and Aimara peasants virtually their only opportunity to be in contact with the rest of the country, and the world, through a mass medium.

Recent reports from government sources indicate that they have registered a total of 132 FM stations (of massive recent insurgence) and 130 AM stations. Adding to it some 20 short wave stations and a few very new ones in AM and FM (including some operating illegally), a most recent study sets the country's total in 289 (Contreras, 1992). It is a rather large number of stations for a small population, but this has to be qualified by the fact that most stations are of very low power - 70% have between 200 and 1,000 watts - and thus of short reach. According to Contreras (1992), only 15% of the stations have an almost nation-wide scope; 22% operate only within State boundaries; and the rest have only local reach, some limitted to very small jurisdictions. Only one station has more than 10 kilowatts.

The great majority of the radio stations are private and commercial but are not components of large corporations or belong to networks; they are rather independent operations run by small entrepreneurs, many ill-equipped and poorly staffed. The second level, in terms of number of stations, is occupied by four groupings, each having close to 20: educational (supported by the Catholic Church), confesional (more

Catholic than Protestant), worker's union stations, and peasant organization radios. The lowest category is that of official broadcasting with 1 central government station, 4 military stations, 1 university station, 1 municipal station and a last one run by a government teacher's college. Only around 35 of the country's total of stations approximating 300 include some programming in Aimara and fewer yet include it in Quechua.

In summary, most Bolivians are limitted to traditional patterns of interpersonal communication, especially those not having Spanish as their native tongue and residing in the country-side. For most mass media, essentially financed by advertising, those who are not in the market are not in the audience, as their contents clearly show. Mass communication is still but another privilege of the dominant minorities.

It was as a grass roots reaction against such unfair situation that people's radio was born in Bolivia. This occurred stemming partly from outside the established radio system and partly from within it.

PEOPLE'S RADIO

A Canadian researcher that has conducted in depth research on peasants and workers radio stations in Latin America, especially in Bolivia and Ecuador, argues that "... the emerging practice of a genuine people's radio in Latin America centrally involves issues of class, power and cultural autonomy" (O'Connor, 1989a, pg. 507). This perception leads to understanding people's radio as the use of this communication medium for the emancipation of the lower strata of the population from domination by the upper strata. Accurate as this general definition may well prove, it may not always imply, however, the presence of elements of political conflict or violent confrontation.

The experiences of Bolivia with people's radio correspond to four formats scaled over a span of some forty five years, thus setting this country as the precursor of the region in the practice of what, since the 70's, is called "popular", "alternative", "participatory", "dialogic" and otherwise democractic communication. Thus, practice preceeded theory by twenty five years or so.

From oldest to youngest, the formats are: (1) mining workers' radios, (2) Catholic educational radio, (3) peasant broadcasting through commercial stations, and (4) peasant union and community radio. The four co-exist today.

It is important to note that the launching point for the whole exercise appears to be the context of change built by the National Revolution started in 1952 with the militant involvement of workers and peasants in addition to mestizos and whites. This was not so because the revolutionary government had a design to foster people's communications or because the party in power showed a will to correct the unfairness in the communication situation. It was rather because the movement for overall and radical social and economic transformation was such that opened broad doors for the lower strata to realize their strength to access to power in diverse manners.

Indian peasants were redemeed in the early 50's from medieval serfdom through land reform and universal vote and soon became organized as a strong pressure group around their particular interests. Workers consolidated a national federation of unions, the Central Obrera Boliviana that grew mighty to a point and a pase that the revolutionary government itself did not expect or want. Peasants demanded better educational opportunities and political participation and workers came to control the bases of the economy then: the nationalized tin mining industry. It was a generalized awakening of the masses within which, as properly pointed out by O'Connor, the interests of the lower and subdued classes and the ancient values of the native cultures were brought to the forefront with strength. Clearly instrumental to both, communication could not be absent from this process. And radio - the least

expensive and the least difficult to handle of the media, and the only not dependent on knowledge of Spanish - came naturally to be chosen by the masses to, at long last, express themselves freely. Thus the bold insurgence of the downtrodden set, without any guiding theory, the practical basis for attempting to democratize communication. "The radios are used - notes O'Connor (1989a, pg. 507) - for direct political organization (to call a meeting, to organize a campaign) but using the radio also gives people important experience in democractic action and decision-making. Radios are also involved in revaluation of indigenous languages and cultures".

The Miner's Radios

In the early 50's, when the National Revolution started, tin was Bolivia's main export and mining in general formed the bases of the national economy. It was because of this centrality that the revolutionary movement had as one of its key postulates the nationalization of the mines which until then belonged, for the most part, to three magnates: Patiño, Hoschild and Aramayo. The government established a State corporation to run the nationalized mines and the national union of mining workers readily gained unusual control over this operation. It thus became the platform to consolidate and expand the overall federation of union workers, Central Obrera Boliviana, to a degree that it soon turned this latter into a "super-State" like organization sharing political power with the party in charge of the government and even acting as a sort of independent comptroller of it.

It was against this background that the miners' radios were born. They were created, operated and paid for by the members of the most militant unions affiliated to those larger organizations but not subject to them in reference to their will to communicate. Since each station belonged to a given miners' union, each of these organizations conducted its broadcasting services with complete autonomy in a self-

management manner until then not practiced in the country. Every union member contributed to establishing and supporting the operation of their station by giving for it an agreed fraction of their monthly pay. Given the fact that the salaries were extremely low, such support was explained by the high level of consciousness of the workers about the crucial importance of having a means of communication of their own to further their cause since commercial media ignored them.

The oldest attempts at establishing the miners' radios were apparently conducted between 1945 and 1949 but they were short-lived and, according to some, even clandestine. However, it was only along the second semester of 1952 that the first stations were openly and effectively established in the main towns of the principal tin mining area, in the southern state of Potosí. Those pioneering stations were Radio La Voz del Minero, of Siglo XX, Radio 21 de Diciembre, of Catavi, and Radio Nacional, of Huanuni. They were followed by stations in Llallagua and in many other districts to a point that by 1963 their total number was of 23 and a few more were yet to be added later*.

The stations were simple and small, provided with elementary equipment whose transmission power ranged between 150 watts and 1.5 kilowatts but, nevertheless, they readily became most influential social institutions. To run them the unions brought at the beginning producers and speakers from the cities but, as soon as local volunteers learned the trade, the external staff proved unneccessary. The miners themselves became broadcasters and their manner of working proved by itself democratic. They asked the people's preferences to build their programming and demanded for sincere reactions to them too. They covered union meetings and organized public debates. They took the microphones into the depths of the mines

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* The following are among the writings on these stations: Lozada and Kunkar (1982), Schmucler and Encinas (1982), Gumucio (1982 and 1983), Kunkar (1983), Arce (1983), Berríos (1984) Kunkar and Lozada (1984), Gonzalez Quintanilla (1984), Encinas (1986), Kunkar (1987), Miranda (1987), Flores (1987 and 1989), Tirado (1988), Salinas (1988), O'Connor (1988a) and Gumucio and Cajías, eds. (1989).

and moved about people's gathering places such as markets, churches and sport fields, inviting everyone to speak up as they pleased. Anyone felt free to visit the studio and get access to the microphone even with reasons as personal and domestic as a woman denouncing a beating by her husband. At times radio speakers were put by people's confidence to perform unforeseen roles of arbiters of private disputes or community conflicts. Through this "open microphone" practice, the miners' radios allowed the people to air out their wants and feelings and exerted pressure over the corporation's management and the government authorities in their jurisdictions. In contrast with commercial urban broadcasters that disdained it, the country's folk music was constantly played in the miners' stations in combination with news and interviews. But the main use of the medium, especially in times of intensity of struggles, was to inform the miners of situations of their interest, to bring about in them consciousness, solidarity and unity and to help them organize themselves to fight for their rights. Thus, along with strikes, broadcasting became the worker's most effective weapon. And because of it they were to be, along the years, rudely repressed by the goverments. The most dictatorial ones often seized stations and some even had military forces destroy them and jail their operators.

Concerned with the spread of radical movements in Bolivia, the Vatican established in 1959 a radio station, Pío XII, in the town of Siglo XX, entrusting its operation to a team of Oblate priests of Canada. Located in specially constructed premises, endowed with first class equipment - 2,000 watts power - and operated by a staff well trained, indoctrinated and paid, the station meant a great competition to the modest union stations but, on the other hand, it stimulated them to improve themselves. Governments were pleased with this conservative intervention but the miners got furious. However, after a few years of close co-existence of the priests with the workers, the former unavoidably came to realize so well the predicament of the latter that they experienced a total conversion. By 1965 Radio Pío XII had become so

militantly identified rather with the cause of the workers that it was now aplauded by them but detested by the authorities* .

With the collapse of tin economy in 1985, the government closed the nationalized mines and rendered jobless some 14,000 workers of the mines. This meant a death blow to unionism and determined the extinction of most of the stations, which in their heyday had reached a total of 27 that had often acted in a network fashion to relentlessly resist authoritarian governments. Today only a half a dozen of the stations struggle to survive haunted by worn-out equipment and lack of money to pay costs of operation or renewal of licenses. However, the validity of the unusual experience not only seems udeniable but has gained the attention and respect of many beyond Bolivia's frontiers.

The Catholic Educational Radio

Shortly after the birth of the first miners station, the first station addressed to the Aimara peasants was established in a village on the shore of Lake Titicaca, at about two hours drive from the city of La Paz. It was Radio Peñas, belonging to a mission of Maryknoll Fathers which, as of 1955 - the third year of land reform in the nation - followed pretty much the classic pattern of the Colombian "radiophonic schools" of ACPO. It emphasized literacy training in Spanish along with Catholic indoctrination, recoursing to both Spanish and Aimara. It did not acknowledge other needs of its native audience or played up their cultural values. Neither did it support the peasants' organizations nor gave much participation to them in the operation of the station. In 1972 the 7-kilowatt transmission plant was moved to La Paz and in 1976 the Maryknoll Fathers donated their station to the Archbishop of that city. He transferred the operation of it to the Brothers of the Christian Schools (La Salle). The

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* For a set of testimonial accounts of this singular experience see Lopez Vigil (1985). Also read Preiswerk (1988).

station's name was changed to Radio San Gabriel, but the transformation was to involve much more than this new denomination.

In fact Radio San Gabriel soon became the country's only mass communication medium fully identified with the Aimara people and totally devoted to serving it day and night*. It did so in a manner that gave ample participation to the peasantry in the conduct of the station from planning and programming to finance and evaluation. It moved from conventional literacy-training to a new literacy program that expanded into wholeistic education adjusted to the Aimara peasant culture and to the practical needs of peasant life. This was called "educational promotional communication" and it was characterized by actively involving the communities in the effort. In fact the station appoints, in consultation with the communities, resident representatives in each of them. It trains them for the educational task through a network of field training centers of its own - the "IRAS" - all of them offering to thousands of peasants workshops in the many skills required by rural development, including agriculture, education and health. In 1980 a harsh dictatorship, regarding all such activities subversive agitation, harrassed the station and destroyed part of its equipment but it did not dare close its operations for fear of the reaction of the influential Catholic Church.

Not having evangelization as its main goal, Radio San Gabriel constitutes at present an unparalelled live demonstration of the people's ability to organize, conduct and maintain an influential grassroots institution for democratic communication. From the three initial persons in charge of production it now has a staff of over 100 members, 95% of which are Aimara peasants. Enjoying since 1982 comfortable premises donated by the Bishop of Saint Louis, in the U.S., it has good studios, a 10 kilowatt transmission plant plus a large antena, an auditorium and many offices

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* For detailed assessments see, among other authors, Guzman y Guzman (1973), Quiroga (1975), Proyecto ASER (1980), Claverie (1981), Maryknoll Fathers (1983), Suarez (1985), Torrico (1985), Centro de Apoyo Técnico a la Educación Popular (1988), Ayma (1989) and Reyes et. al. (1990).

hosting multiple activities. Research, programming, script-writing, agricultural, health and educational departments, entertainment units, soap-opera and contests sections, and the like. It even has a large department of postal services and has signed contracts with many government agencies to perform educational work for them. An the very early morning newscast by Aimara journalist and researcher Donato Ayma is said to reach and influence about half a million people, including Aimara peasants of southern Peru, an audience size not enjoyed by any other radio newscaster in the nation.

Two remarkable features of the San Gabriel style of work are worthy of special notice. One is that its production is organized in the collective manner characteristic of the Aimara communal spirit: each staff member has to perform, in turns, each and every one of the key jobs in the station. In this way everybody will be able to do everything and production will be participatory but in a sharing mode, while over-specialization will be avoided. The other characteristic is that, practically all members of the staff being peasants, they have to leave the station for a period every year to return to work in their rural communities so as to regain contact with their people. Through this devise alienation should be avoided and the broadcasters should remain familiar with their original reality and loyal to their people.

Nowhere else, at least in Latin America, exists a radio station of the nature and dimensions of Radio San Gabriel. It is therefore not surprising to learn that it was granted in Spain in 1991 the "Fray Bartolomé de las Casas" award in recognition of its 35 years of tireless and fruitful dedication to helping the Aimara peasants overome underdevelopment and attain justice.

Exceptional as San Gabriel evidently is, it is not the only station of its kind in Bolivia. By a recent count (Reyes, 1990) there are a dozen more spread accross the entire Bolivian territory communicating in Spanish, Aimara, Quechua and even some Tupi-Guaraní tongues of the Amazon jungle. The resources of these are less

impressive than those of San Gabriel but their merits and impact are comparable. And they all respond to the same philosophy: their mission is to stimulate peasants to perform autonomous leading roles as communicators in their own languages to preserve their identity and culture and strive for their advancement and liberation.

An outstanding Catholic educational station serving peasants in the northern Amazonian districts of Bolivia is Radio San Miguel located in the city of Riberalta of the jungle state of Beni, one of the most forgotten of all. Riberalta is the marketing center for rubber, chestnut and fine woods. Remote, as it is close to the Brazilian border, and seriously lacking on roads due in part to heavy rains that often flood the territory, the area is linked through rivers and by air. Its population is disperse and gravely lacks in services of all kinds, including health and education. Belonging to several small Tupí-Guaraní jungle cultures, whose languages are not well known as Quechua or Aimara, the peasants there can hardly communicate among themselves and with the rest of the country. They are easily exploited by latifundia owners and unscrupulous merchants. And they are yet far from having union organizations as those already existing for many years in the highlands.

Maryknoll Fathers founded the station in 1968 precisely with the intention to help break this situation on non-communication that facilitates underdevelopment and oppression. Since then San Miguel has been untyringly struggling to help peasant organization grow strong, to improve educational opportunities and health conditions and to increase agricultural production as well as refine marketing systems. Its programs are informative, educational and entertaining, paying special attention to women and children. They are also participatory since they use every opportunity to involve the community in program making and recourse to the valuable assistance of a network of voluntary people's reporters. Since its audience cannot easily come to its headquarters, San Miguel goes to visit it at least in the neighborhoods of Riberalta. It takes its microphones to them by improvising stages

in patios or parks and conducting broadcasting in an open auditorium fashion through the program called "Hellow Neighbor!" . Also it some times sends teams of its reporters in river tours to interview audience segments on small village after the other*.

In summary Radio San Miguel uses a somewhat different set of communication strategies to adjust to the nature of its audience and of the environmental circumstances in which it operates. But its mission is no different from that of San Gabriel and all the other ERBOL affiliates: help bring about economic, cultural and political emancipation for the peasantry.

Already in 1967 these radio stations - Catholic but not confessional - grouped themselves in an organization called today Educación Radiofónica Boliviana (ERBOL), of which San Gabriel itself is a member. Put together their kilowatt power accounts today for about 40% of Bolivia's total. They have built firm links with some 800 grassroots organizations and 2,500 community groups accross the nation. In its first decade of cooperative action, combining distance with classroom education techniques, ERBOL had over 100,000 registered students. However it does far more than literacy training. Oriented by a declaration of principles, ERBOL is clearly committed to fostering non-formal education as a tool for helping the forgotten Bolivians attain liberation from injustice and participate in building a new society**

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Since 1980 ERBOL -having reached a high level of ability to conduct education and foster organization among the peasantry and the rural poor - moved to emphasize

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* For detailed accounts of this station see Avejera (1979), Aguirre (1990 and 1992) and Aguirre and Abbot (1991).

** For further information on ERBOL and on some of its affiliates see inter alia: Guarnizo (1966), Pruss (1966), Radio Santa Clara (1972), Chain (1974), Mozo (1974), Retamoso (1975), Trías (1975), ERBOL-ACLO (1977), Tirado y Retamoso (1977), Tirado (1978), CentroLatinoamericano de Educación de Adultos (1978), Volker (1978), Acción Cultural Loyola (1979), Steinbach (1982), Educación Comunitaria por Radio (1982), Educación Radiofónica Boliviana (1985), Grebe (1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1991a and 1991b) and Reyes (1991a and 1991b).

the people's active participation in mass communication. Its basic tool for it is a very high frequency telefax system linking each and everyone of its affiliate stations accross the nation. This provides conditions for grassroots organizations to be made aware - swiftly and permanently - of local, national and international realities through a twice-a-day network newscast. For the first time in history a mass medium gives coverage to events in remote and small villages which never appear in the television screens or in the columns of the big dailies.

In summary, after a quarter of a century of remarkably successful experience and counting with 17 affiliates, ERBOL is today the largest, most complex and most productive educational broadcasting network of Latin America.

Peasant Broadcasting Through Commercial Stations

Although it is practically as old as the two formats already reviewed - miners' radio and Catholic educational radio - this third format is little known and hardly researched at all. It is a commercial format in which the peasant communicators do not own or run the stations - urban and commercial for the most part - but have gained access to them at the earliest hours of the day, when Aimara people listen while city dwellers have not awaken yet.

The forms of access are renting this "dead time" from the station owners, using it on a profit-sharing basis with them or being paid by them to do programming addressed at the Aimara-speaking audience in the marginal suburbs of La Paz and in the rural areas relatively close to it. In both cases the broadcasts are sustained through advertising contributed in a minor part by sources in the very Indian audience.

This audience is not small at all: at the very least one million people, in a country with a total population of less than 7 million. Half of them are located in La

Paz and its satellite city of El Alto, and the other half in the field areas of the northwestern state of La Paz, which includes the huge Lake Titicaca at 12,000 feet altitude and the borders with Peru. La Paz has some 800,000 inhabitants, of which at least a third are Aimara Indian migrants, and the neighboring El Alto counts on around 400,000 people, of which easily two thirds are also such migrants. Together they constitute a very strong, and growing, presence of the autochtonous culture in the country's main urban center and seat of the government.

While said community is poverty-striken with minimal exceptions and thus has no major significance in the economy, it has instead much political importance given that, since the National Revolution of 1952, Indians gained the right to vote without having to be proficient in Spanish and are militantly organized to defend their interests. Consequently they wield these days considerable political power. This becomes most evident in times of elections. Carlos Palenque, a non-Indian broadcaster who is however fluent in Aimara, understood this reality long ago and established in the past decade first a radio station and next a television channel especially and clearly addressed at the Aimaras. Combining Aimara and Spanish, stressing native music - which is very rich and popular since the middle of the 50's or so - and giving much attention as well as active participation to the Aimara population of La Paz, he rapidly became a popular personality and a public figure. Soon he formed a new political party of populist leanings, which grew at surprising speed. His candidate for Major of the City of La Paz won the local elections in 1991 and he came to preside the Municipal Council. Palenque - known by all as "El Compadre" - is now candidate to the Presidency of the Republic in the national elections to be held in June 1993. While it seems very unlikely that he may be the winner, his swift ascent from being totally unknown in politics to becoming the head of a party that has representation in Congress and to being a presidential candidate speaks eloquently of the importance of the Indian people in today's democracy-prone

Bolivia. And it shows too that mass communication in the service of grassroots concerns has attained in this country a level of influence probably unique in the region* .

Apparently the first time that Aimara was used in broadcasting in Bolivia was when a U.S.-sponsored Protestant station, Radio Cruz del Sur, carried out for a while in 1949 an attempt at doing religious indoctrination in that language. There are no reliable records as to who did the speaking at that time but, in 1955, one of the clear precursors was Guillermo Vargas Hidalgo, who went by the nickname of "Mallku", Cóndor in Aimara, and aired through the same station a daily program - "Los Sembradores de la Luz Divina" from 5:00 to 6:00 a.m. Later he did a different kind of program in Radio Altiplanõ, whose director, Raul Salmón, some years was also made Major or La Paz in part by the Indian vote. Eventually Vargas became the first writer, producer and director of radio plays in Aimara, purporting legends or dramatizing problems of the Aimara community. Another precursor peasant broadcaster was Pedro Tapia, who came to be known by his audience as "Amuyiri" (the thinker) and also engaged in playwriting. A third was Elias Ticona, and another station giving early access to the Aimaras was Radio Agustin Aspiazu, followed later by Radio Mendez and Radio Continental.

The unusual insurgence of these broadcasters was not free of problems since social prejudice (Indians were still downrated in spite of the revolution) and professional competitiveness made their first steps hard. They however persevered and stayed on the job until the last days of their lives. They were gradually followed in the trade by other who also had to train themselves on the job. Some of them are still at it; for instance, Fidel Huanca and Genaro Quino and a woman: Cleofé Vargas, known as "Maria Kantuta".

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* These are two of the few studies published on the Palenque phenomenon: Sandoval and Saravia (1991) and Contacto (1987).

Several factors gave impulse to Aimara broadcasting through commercial urban stations. The revolutionary government caused by the middle of the 50's a grave breakdown of the nation's economy and to survive the crisis more radio stations became interested in getting an income form the early morning transmission time, until then usually "dead". On the other hand, this government launched a massive literacy campaign that found very convenient to recourse to the stations. As of the early 60's the diffusion of the transistor greatly enhanced the broadcasting audience and made possible to reach beyond the city into the rural areas. This was also the time when the first pure Aimara and Quechua music records were produced and sold. The peasant union movement and political activism in the rural areas, especially in election times, also lead many to try and reach the peasantry. And the impact of Radio San Gabriel in the highlands pointed out to a new audience that perhaps would evolve to became also a market for at least some of the city factory products and the imported goods. But, along with it all, there was the historical realization of the native people that the time had come for them to overcome the state of non-communication to which they had been subject since colonial days.

Studies on peasant radio in Bolivia were hardly existing until some 20 years after the inception of it. Most valuable were the pioneer contributions of Xavier Albó (1970, 1973a, 1973b, 1974, 1977a, 1977b, 1977c, 1979, 1981 and 1989)) and of Quiroga and Albó (1974a, 1974b) emphasizing the importance of radio in relation to schooling and to the use of the native languages in the country as means of preserving the indigenous identities. And, as noted already in this paper, several studies were conducted also as of the 70's on the Catholic educational radio and a few on the miners' radios, including some published abroad. But there were no studies including more than a quick mention of the Aimara commercial broadcasting that began in 1955 until as late as 1983. In that year researchers of the School of Communication of the Catholic University of Bolivia - Tirado, Czaplicki and Morello

(1983) - did include some significant mention of the independent producers although their useful survey was organized by stations over time and not by broadcasting formats. It included detailed interviews with producers and programmers - mostly of the Catholic rural education ones - as well as with audience samples, and obtained orientation and organizational data as well as preferences of schedule, contents and formats. The study was, in summary, the first comprehensive inventory of peasant broadcasting for peasants in Bolivia and, at the same time, a sketchy but suggestive assessment of the experiences conducted comparing at times commercial versus non-commercial stations.

Since then a few more specific writings on peasant broadcasting have been published giving some insights into specific operations. (For instance, Educación Comunitaria por Radio-ECORA (1980), Gwyn (1983), Congreso Nacional de Comunicadores y Radialistas Nativos de Bolivia (1984), O'Connor (1988b), Vega and Aliaga (1989) and Aliaga (1990). There are still, however, no studies going deeply into the experiences of the unknown broadcasters of the dawn who communicate in the ancient language of the land to help bring about a new society.

To at least begin to alleviate this regrettable insufficiency the authors of the present paper conducted some semi-structured interviews with a sample of the independent peasant radio producers and held brief and informal conversations with a few of the owners and directors of the stations in which the former work*. Thirteen of those producers - 11 men and 2 women - were selected from those working for stations in La Paz and El Alto which do not have their own producers but rather rent out air time to the independent ones. La Paz has 37 broadcasting stations, of which 13 have today programs in Aimara; moreover, 4 out of these 13 operate only in Aimara: the non-profit oriented San Gabriel and the commercial ones Splendid,

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* They were kindly assisted in this task by the following students of communication of the Catholic University: Ninoska Torres, Ximena Aguirre, Jenny Escobar y Marco Antonio Cusicanqui.

Nacional de Bolivia and Emisoras Unidas, with these latter two having at least two thirds of their time entrusted to the independent producers. And all the 6 stations of El Alto include substantive portions of air time in Aimara handled either by their own staff or through recruiting the independent broadcasters.

Who are these independent producers? What motivated them to do what they do? How do they work? What about costs and profits? What is their programming like and their audience reaction to it? Answers to basic questions as these will be subsequently summarized.

The age of the Aimara broadcasters interviewed goes from 28 to 64 years, with a few having been on the job for 30 years or more. Most of them are men, but husband-wife teams were also identified. Their year of initiation as broadcasters varies between 1955 and 1988 and only very few of them had formal broadcasting training.

Two motivations appear to have been central to lead them to become broadcasters. On the one hand, the perception of a unique opportunity to serve their people and contribute to securing the prevalence of their culture. On the other hand, the pleasure of communicating massively and in their own tongue along with the popularity and status gained from becoming media personalities among the Aimara audiences in the cities and in the country-side. At a lesser level two other motivations were recorded. The will to give continuity to a communication duty previously embraced by parents or close relatives. And the hope to get an income better than that attainable in agriculture, an expectation that would hardly materialize.

Indeed "commercial" Aimara broadcasting can hardly be regarded business. Station owners charge the producers between the equivalent to 50 and 200 dollars per one hour of early morning transmission (usually 5:00 to 6:00 a.m.) along a month Monday through Saturday. (Weekend programs also exist). This involves the use of studio and plant as well as the work of the cabin operator. The independent producer

is then free to make the program at will and to sell as much of the time agreed as convenient. However, since most of his advertising sources are in the poor native community itself, he cannot charge to it more than very modest prices, especially in the case of personal messages. These are, for instance, information on travel, illness, birth and death of people in the audience, as well as birthday greetings, musical dedications, or requests for someone to send a given object or merchandise to somebody else in the field. Each time one of such brief messages is passed the average charge will probably be the equivalent of US$ 0.30. Other notices may allow for slightly higher charges (50 or 60 cts.), such as calls for meetings that must be repeated several times. Yet somewhat higher charges (1-3 dollars) can be made for spots of crafts' shops (carpentry, mechanics, embroidery, and small businesses as tailor and seamstress shops, bakeries and home-delivered pastries, waiters by the hour, weavers and many others alike. And the most expensive advertising category is that formed by large firms selling beer and licquours, detergents, agricultural tools, veterinary products, automovil tires, furniture and electrodomestic articles. The same is true of political adds, especially in election periods. Whereas small advertising is left for the producers to obtain and enjoy this upper bracket category is usually negotiated and collected by the station owners. And here the lion's share is often unlikely to be that of the independent producer. On the contrary, in fact, some of them at times even face the risk of not only failing to make a profit but even of not getting enough adds just to pay for the time rented.

Why then stay in this trade? As said already, it is matter of love to a job that while it may not generate a handsome and steady income it does give apparently fun, prestige and the satisfaction of being useful to one's people. As this does not secure, however, cash for survival, one half of the independent producers interviewed have other occupations along with broadcasting; they are teachers or artisans or small merchants.

Not one of the independent producers would seem to consider giving up his post behind the microphone. This in spite of the fact that, in addition to getting as a rule a very modest income, they are often forced to work in precarious conditions. Some station owners, for instance, do not allow them to use their record collections and thus they must buy their own. Likewise they have no access to professional recording units for field use; therefore they have to remain content with amateur recorders which do not have good reproduction quality in their programs. And any expenses incurred in covering events have to be absorbed by them too.

Their production mode is artisanal. With the possible exception of radio drama programs, they use no scripts and hardly ever pre-record a program due to lack of time and facilities. With little more than a copy of a daily newspaper and perhaps a few sequency notes, they jump to the microphone every morning to improvise messages interspersed with folk music and adds, for periods ranging between 30 and 90 minutes. They have to research, plan, produce, evaluate and finance their activity all by themselves "with their bare fingers".

Until about six years ago all independent peasant broadcasting was done by individuals as those in the sample. Since then, however, group production has been added to the scene. There are indeed at present some 10 groups in La Paz. They include broadcasters, musical interpreters recoursing to the wide variety available of autochtonous instruments, and theater performers. And, although each is usually identified with a given ideological line, they all seem to be getting acceptance from the station's management.

The content of advertising has already been described, identifying its two major categories: personalized public service messages and commercial adds or political publicity. The rest of the programming is news and entertainment of various kinds. Two formats are most frequent: the plain newscast, relatively brief, and the magazine, usually long as it puts together news with music, legends and humor and

recourses to field and studio interviews and live interventions of musical groups. Magazines predominate over newscasts.

The news programs are not limitted to rural topics or to purely Aimara interests; they are broad enough in scope to include mention of national and even international events as the producers feel their audience should be aware of far more than local community festivities or farming practices.

The Spanish language dailies are a source of information for the broadcasters, who selectively read some pieces or condense several, adapting them on the spot to the probable interest of their audience and freely commenting them if necessary. Their first-hand sources are neighborhood or village authorities and informal leaders, as well as executives of grassroots organizations as unions, mothers, clubs, associations of settlers, sports clubs and the like. To frequently contact these sources is time-consuming but gives the broadcasters direct insights into their people's needs and reactions to public affairs. Following-up certain events is something they do rather often as, beyond the immediate news of the day, they may feel necessary to go to the people for feedback and adjustment. Some times they do a sort of in-depth reporting on matters which have long been forgotten by the cities' mass media. And they tend to be quite outspoken in their criticisms of authorities, institutions or individual citizens. In times of autocracies many of them venture to condemn government behavior and this at times brings repression over them: programs are cancelled through pressures to the stations' owners and some of the independent producers have had included in their experiences ill treatment by the police or even long days of jail.

Entertainment programs correspond to three main categories: music, festivals and plays. Music has, in turn, three subcategories: highland autochtonous melodies played with Indian instruments, broader highland music (not all of it rural) played by brass bands, and lowlands tropical music played by string groups or orchestras; the

former of the subcategories is predominant. Festivals refer to the radio coverage of specially organized public presentations of musicians and costummed Indian folk dancers. Often these festivals are held at the auditory or the patios in the stations' premises and usually last for several hours. And plays refer to radio dramas - "radionovelas" in Spanish - either on legends or historical episods or about daily events of present-day Aimara life. Poetic drama being well rooted in the ancient ancestry of the Aimaras, this broadcasting format based on dialogue and fiction is appreciated much by the radio audiences and proves very effective to put some messages across in a much more attractive manner than through plain monologue (see Philco, 1989).

Some programs bear titles in Aimara (i.e., "Quipa", "Yanapuri") whereas other do it in Spanish (i.e., "Pueblo Aimara", "Amanecer Musical") and few choose to combine the two languages, i.e., "Buenos Días Chuquiago Marka" (Good Morning La Paz). At a first glance, note observers fully familiar with Aimara, the peasant programs seem much alike from one station to the next. But actually they are not necessarily so for the Indian listeners. These are able to distinguish between personal communication styles and to celebrate elegant uses of their tongue or condemn the opposite. The Aimara language being very rich and complex, it has many nuances and lends itself to variations in expresiveness that the most sophisticated members of the audience seem to enjoy.

In contrast with highly organized stations as San Gabriel or with some of the larger commercial stations, those hosting the peasant broadcasters conduct no audience research of their own and show no inclination at all to have the impact of the Aimara programs be systematically evaluated. For most owners these program seem to be just an easy way to expand a bit their audience and, hopefully, to get some additional income without having any expenses or work. Once in a long while some institutions may include these programs in broader assessments of rural audiences so

as to learn preferences of schedule, contents and format by sex, age, occupation and location. Such information, however, rarely ever reaches the stations or the broadcasters.

The independent producers seem to remain self-assured through the informal and occasional feedback they get when going to the field or being visited in the studio, as well as by receiving letters from audience members. In some cases the letters are very numerous and on occasions the producers have to find ways to inhibit visits so that stations do not get crowded with voluntary informers, admirers of the speakers or people with claims and requests for help or justice. For such seems to be the extent to which the peasants trust and appreciate their broadcasters. Thus these may never have at hand scientific data on audience reactions to safely go by, but they know for sure that - out there in the shanty towns of the cities and in the lonely huts of the villages - thousands of their peers are every morning alertly listening to what they have to tell them about the nation, themselves, and the world.

Peasant Union and Community Radio

This last format to be reviewed is the newest and thus also the least developed of the four existing in the country. As different from the unions of mining workers, the peasant leagues organized on the impulse of the 1952 National Revolution did not recourse on their own to radio ownership to further their interests. Nevertheless a station in the city of Oruro, at 130 miles southeast of La Paz, was to become the property of the Federation of Peasant Unions. Called Radioemisoras Bolivia was established in 1964 by the same group of Canadian Oblate Fathers that had built Radio Pío XII in the mines. It was basically addressed at the Quechua and Aimara population of the peripheral districts of the city, then still the heart of the mining activity of the country and as such a stronghold of union activities.

Next to the station the priests established an institute for cultural research and popular education, INDICEP, through which they gave a strong educational orientation to ther broadcasting. By 1971, anxious to give the organized peasantry the opportunity to own and run a self-managed station as those of the miners, the Oblates did the transfer to the above mentioned peasant federation. Unfortunately the leaders of it failed to take advantage of such convenient option. Changing many directors until 1978 the station was operated without order or efficacy and turned often subdued to the interests of political parties dominating the peasant unions.

Eventually the station became a commercial one but it retained its ability to broadcast in Quechua, Aimara and Spanish along with a chain of postal boxes in rural locations close to the city through which it has constant feedback from its audience.

Another, and more fortunate, peasant union creation in the field of broadcasting in Bolivia is Radio Yuraq Molino established in 1985 in the Carrasco province of the state of Cochabamba at the center of country's territory. Established by the Peasant Union Sub-Central of Yuraq Molino in cooperation with a private institute of education for development, INEDER, the station was purchased with the contributions of all members of the 27 unions affiliated to the sub-central either through a small amount of cash or its equivalent in farm products which the sub-central sold. Because of the format, the station operations are presided by a body of 20 representatives of the "share holders" and 3 of INEDER. Manned by just 6 staff members, of which only one, the INEDER-appointed director, is not a peasant, the little station operates on a diesel generator of electricity and has a very low transmission power. Nevertheless it reaches an audience of around 40,000 inhabitants, mostly Quechua peasants, in whose language it consequently operates.

Among the main purposes of the station are fostering the integration of minute communities isolated due to the lack of roads and stimulate peasant participatory organization to increase agricultural production and improve community life. Its

programming stresses health, education and forestry concerns and the broadcasting formats include a radio drama with social contents. Linked on a daily basis to a neighboring station affiliated to the ERBOL system, Yurak Molino has been able to build its information service. And its now planning the establishment of rudimentary recording cabins in key locations of its jurisdictions so that it can get the most out contributions from voluntary local correspondents. It hopes to become by the end of 1993 a self-managed station fully financed by the peasant unions.

Thousand of years older than the Quechua culture, the Aimara civilization was first subdued by the Incas, who spoke Quechua, and later by the Spaniards. The basic cell of its social organization is the "ayllu", a remarkable communal format, which still prevails in some parts of Bolivia. One of them is a remote province in the southern state of Potosí in one of whose disperse rural jurisdictions an ayllu has remained intact. Called Chayantaka it is composed of 10,000 peasants presently belonging to the Quechua culture but with many remnants of the originary Aimara one.

Bent on putting an end to their isolation and underdevelopment the leaders of the ayllu, with some external assistance through a rural development project, established in the middle of 1990 a radio station through the peasants' contributions in agricultural products. They named it Mallku Kiririya to honor their chief deity, the highest mountain in their area bearing this denomination which means "The Lord's Voice". The humble but adequate premises of the station were built in the traditional cooperative fashion characteristic of the Aimara communities. And collective contributions made also possible to buy the diesel electricity generator to run the transmission plant.

All the station members are peasants and, as they cannot leave their farm unattended, they have to broadcast only in weekends until they are able to train young volunteers to operate on a daily basis. Transmission start on Sunday at 4:00 a.m. with a mid morning interruption to save the scarce energy available. This,

however, has resulted in a work modality by which the station has become physically the main center of reunion of the ayllu. Many peasants walk considerable distances to get there and be present when the programs are transmitted, to see the native musicians, singers and danzers and to meet and converse with fellow peasants, friends and authorities. This is, therefore, truly a radio of the peasants, by the peasants and for the peasants.

The station's director is an Aimara peasant who had broadcasting training in La Paz and is also familiar with Quechua and Spanish. Since all work is voluntary and he has no farm there, he earns his living practicing herbal traditional medicine from Monday through to Friday. Thanks to he and his co-producers these long forgotten natives can now feel a part of a much bigger "ayllu": the Republic of Bolivia.

OTHER UNUSUAL FEATURES

There are other singular characteristics of people's radio experiences in Bolivia. The insurgence of "people's reporters", the creation of professional associations of Indian broadcasters and the establishment of professional training for these latter.

The "People's Reporters"

"Reporteros Populares" are amateur journalists who act as voluntary collaborators of the information services of peasant radios operating within two of the four formats reviewed here: the Catholic educational stations and the union and community ones. They apparently first emerged in peasant radio work north of La Paz, in the sub-tropical area of Yungas, but are now available in many parts of the country. They are rather young men and women who operate as collectors of information in their respective communities and provide it to the stations for which

they work without remuneration. They report by letter, by phone if at all possible, and by sending recorded cassettes, thus acting as field correspondents and also helping at times to tap audience reactions and preferences.

Virtually all of these reporters begin operating without having had any training for it, compensating this handicap with enthusiasm and diligence. Some are granted guided practices by they stations but only a few have gotten opportunities for more formal training. And yet their services are much appreciated by the established broadcasters and begin to be acknowledged by professional organizations of newspapermen. Usually bilingual, in many cases they are elected to perfom as reporters by their own communities which see in them potential good communicators. A good number them soon show to be so indeed by locally producing inexpensive leaflets, airing programs through loud-speakers or displaying mural newspapers in their home towns.

An outstanding case of women participation in people's reporting is that of Centro "Gregoria Apaza", a non-governmental organization for the advancement of women. With headquarters in El Alto, this institution makes optimal use of communication possibilities since 1985. Girls trained by it in sub-urban settlements of peasant migrants activate the insertion of news and other programs on low-strata women's life in several stations and, on the other hand, have in one of them a weekly program on women's health. (See Alzerreca and Ruiz (1987) and Roca dn Sandoval (1989). In the present year their efforts culminated with the establishment of a small broadcasting station of their own and plans are now on their way to train women for people's reporting in television aswell.

Professional Associations of Indian Broadcasters

Already in 1978 a group of pioneers of Aimara peasant radio organized in La Paz the Association of Native Broadcasters. Along the next five years, however, continuous government changes, which included a brutal dictatorial period, made impossible the normal functioning and development of the association. On the 1983 return to democracy, the association revives and a year later, after a nation-wide congress, it evolves to the level of Asociación Nacional de Comunicadores y Radialistas en Idiomas Nativos, embracing Aimara, Quechua and Tupí-Guaraní membership. It fosters the formation of several specialized broadcasting production groups and starts exploring opportunities for formal training in the trade for its members.

In 1985 the association formulates its main goal as follows: "To strengthen and expand the system of alternative communication, advocating permanently for the peasants, for the native cultures and for the workers in terms of their interests and of those of the country". Without denying the realities of the class struggles, of which the peasantry is a part, the association stresses the paramount importance of acknowledging the existence of the distinctive Aimara culture and the need to put mass communication in the service of it.

No other Latin American country, including those also having significant percentages of native Indian population as Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala or Mexico, seem to have a comparable professional organization. The fact that Bolivia has it indicates the degree to which people's radio has been able to evolve in this country due in part to the opening derived from the social revolution of 1952 but mostly to the extraordinary lucidity, talent and drive of the Indian people. Cancio Mamani, the president of the Bolivian association, was appointed in September of 1992 vice-president of the World Association of Community Radios (AMARC).

Professional Training

The above mentioned broadcasting association sought actively to obtain facilities to improve the skills of its membership. In 1983 it was able to secure collaboration from the Ministry of Information, the Catholic University and Unesco to conduct a short production workshop for peasant broadcasters.

Furthermore, in 1984 the association signed an agreement with the Catholic University of Bolivia committing itself to actively participate in the efforts for national integration on conditions of equality with other social groups and to competently handle communication in the service of social development for the nation's majorities. As part of this agreement the university organizes a 3-year diploma course for some 50 Aimara peasant broadcasters of La Paz and, as of 1986, it was to do likewise for about 80 of them in the Quechua-speaking state of Cochabamba. Thus, for the first time in Latin America, a region with more than 200 communication schools, native Indians were granted access to university training.

Commenting on these achievements, the president of the association, Cancio Mamani, said: "We think that, counting on a strong organization and at the same time with human resources trained precisely in the sciences of social communication, we can face the challenge of proposing to ourselves a whole project of communication to cater to the interests and views of native cultures, at first, but in the long run to those of a process of national development".

In a few weeks from now the Catholic University will confer in La Paz, for the first time in its history, the Bachelor's degree in communication to a native Indian student: Donato Ayma, the multilingual radio and television broadcaster who could well be regarded as the Walter Cronkite of Aimara audiences.

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