

# 1968: Year of the heroic guerrilla media

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1968

Liberation News Service — You don't have to be (or even read Marshall McLuhan to realize that without an iron grip on the media—and most importantly on television—the rulers of this country could hold power approximately one month. The average person here is not so happy that given an easy and acceptable access to honest explanations of what goes on here he would not take action as we have.

Indeed, given the incredibly well-controlled and sophisticated manipulation of the “free” press in this country, it is a wonder anybody gets liberated at all.

The press, like the rest of the corporate-liberal system, does not make its manipulations blatant. Obfuscation and half-truth are much more important and in the long run more effective than the Big Lie, though there is no hesitation to employ the latter should all else fail.

The actual financial-editorial control is also indirect—the government only regulates television and radio licensing, limiting access to the corporate rich. While we are free to publish our undergrounds (within limits), we are certainly not “free” to establish a publication with the circulation and power of a Time or Newspeak.

Again the issue is not so clearcut; the national magazines can exist because they have wide popular appeal, but this is as much a part of their snowballing power to shape that appeal as it is real consumer demand. And it is not the subscribers who support the mammoth media trusts, it is advertisers. Why else would monopolist airlines and communications systems and raw material suppliers buy ads? Leaf through a magazine and see whose ads are there and you will know who is paying to have what said.

## Keeping the Gap Unbridged

Talk as you will about faction-fighting, tactics, alienation, the ultimate reason the left is isolated from the rest of the country is that there is simply no physical means to hold a dialogue on our own terms. When we are on the air it is Huntley talking about us, Johnny Carson asking us his questions, Eric Sevareid patiently explaining that Stokely is a black Hitler, or the *New York Times* documenting vicious student attacks against the NYCPD.

Even the music, which perhaps has proved to be our most effective weapon, is quite rightly controlled. There is WBAI, an FM in New York, and Pacifica on the coast, and in between, what? From WABC to WKNR to WOMB the stations are syndicate-controlled, very carefully keeping the subversive stuff off, very carefully walking the payola line with manufactured “hits” that almost make sense but never quite reach libido, real life or beyond the rhetoric of love.

It was thus that Sgt. Pepper, the most important piece of music since Elvis Presley, a work that sold 4,000,000 albums to the youth market, never hit the top forty. Or the Mothers, or Country Joe, or the Doors beyond carefully selected pieces, or the Fugs, etc. (Interestingly, the silence has been cracked by Life Magazine, a recent issue of which carried an excellent article by Frank Zappa on music and the fifties. I attribute the printing of this article to the same strain as Johnson's pushing the 18-year-old vote—we are too big to ignore now so better jump in and

reserve a spot at the head. In the case of Zappa's article, however, I think they made a mistake—it's downright subversive).

Thus our struggle just to communicate with the rest of our countrymen is met, by a well-engineered and total (if not always obvious) quarantine. At this moment a full-scale rebellion raging in Berkeley has yet to be reported on the front page of the *New York Times*; a confrontation between straight youth and police in Boston can be found nowhere in print outside Beantown; the on-going struggle of the Black Panthers receives mention only when an Oakland cop stubs his toe.

This should surprise none of us. The students at Columbia who expressed dismay at the *Times*' coverage of the rebellion and blamed it on the publisher's position as Columbia trustee were alarmingly naive—the *Times* is never honest, has never printed the real news' from Latin America, Vietnam or anywhere else for that matter, and Sulzberger's position in no way affected *Times* coverage. The function of the *Times* is to serve those who pay for it by (mis-)leading those who read it, no more or less at Columbia than Berkeley, Harlem or the Bay of Pigs. (Businessmen who want to know what is really going on, by the way, read trade magazines and the *Wall Street Journal*).

## All Media to the People

It is clear that our demonstrations, our head-bustings, our resistance, will come to naught unless we can impress on more people the legitimacy and worth of our alternatives. People in this society are searching for answers and the media is geared specifically to insure that they do not find them.

This illegitimate force must be exposed. The means of mass communications belong to the masses.

Perhaps the most important event of the year occurred last week in New York, when forty free people walked into a live television show and began talking like real people about real things. The total flip-out of the straight press indicates the gravity of the event. It could serve as a prototype.

Similarly, high schools and junior high schools should be extensively leafleted on the true nature of perhaps the most powerful force over their lives—the local radio station. How do songs get to be "hits"? Who owns it? Which out-of-town stations are affiliated with it and why are songs so conveniently popular in so many towns at once? Where do survey charts come from and who puts the music in the local juke boxes. Why is it the hourly news never carries the real stuff about Vietnam, and why is it so impossible to start a station owned by the kids themselves?

In Germany, the key initial attacks were against ex-Nazi Axel Springer, owner of the Time-Life of Germany. Where do We start here? The *Times*? Yes. CBS-NBC? Yes. *Time*? Yes. Not the "extremist" press. Not the press that admits its bias. But the smooth "objective" indirectly-but-firmly controlled fourth branch of government which shaped our early lives and continues to lead this country to hell.

We demand public (not government) ownership of the media with equal and free access to all. We demand an end to the system which allows government officials to express their views on the air every day while ours are restricted to private conversation. We demand an end to the "freedom" of the press which allows a Rockefeller ten advertisements for every private "letter-to-the-editor" published at the corporation's discretion.

The media as now constituted is a perverse organ of social corporate control.

A free press means free and equal access to all media for all the people.

1968 is the year to reclaim the airwaves.

yeah yeah yeah yeaaaaah

# fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #58, July 18–31, 1968

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