

# teleSUR, the Workers' Paradise? A Ca exclusive

By **Juan Cristobal Nagel** - December 19, 2014





(The full 5,500-word leaked email in [Spanish](#) and [English](#))

As [teleSUR](#) prepares to launch an English-language satellite station in July 2015 (its 10th anniversary), reports of mistreatment at its Quito headquarters. Several high-level employees have been mistreated and/or expelled by the company. Low wages, shift schedules and workloads are causing disillusionment in the ranks.

Caracas Chronicles has received a lengthy leaked email by an Argentine former employee, "G", who worked tirelessly in a toxic environment, then forced out unceremoniously. Other foreigners have reported similar experiences. Venezuelans on low wages are described as working excessive overtime, even having to beg for pay.

Our source of the leaked email, "X", has given us more information. He tells us that overworked employees face endemic management incompetence in planning media content, infrastructure and responsibility. There is poor quality control across the board, and a consistent disregard for employee complaints.

Just months after the launch of the [teleSUR English \(TSE\) website](#), it is currently undergoing a costly struggle to attract three-figure views on the [TSE YouTube channel](#). An advertising outlets was spectacularly squandered by an amateur PR agency.

This is the story ... of how we got the story.

The leak came out of the blue from an alias, X. It was a long private email by G to select employees quickly. As I began to delve into the contents, I began corresponding with X, trying to find out where Chronicles was his point of contact.

G was clearly bitter about his experience. He complained about working conditions in the organization: local staff is paid miserably -- around \$90 per month at the time of writing -- while foreigners face an “unbearable” intrigue. Foreigners are then asked to speak with local employees, requesting the deadlines.

As for the launch of the TSE website last July, it was apparently a disaster-in-the-making. The website had technical incompetency, with the page displaying incorrectly on portable screens for months. The international print, flopped. For many weeks, published news articles were riddled with typos.

The problems with foreign journalists came to a head when they were accused by the inner circle.

This wasn't an angle I was expecting -- obviously, an international news organization based in London with professionals from abroad, preferably with experience in multimedia broadcasting. Those folks would come from London, New York or Buenos Aires and move to Caracas to earn bolívares.

The downside for foreigners is that their work contracts are drawn up... in Colombia!

G claims that “while they brandish the values of 21st century socialism, they draw up garbage contracts in a neoliberal country in South America: Colombia. It's really the first revolution I've known that erases the past.”

The headmaster of the new English-language operation is none other than **our old nemesis**, **Verónica Schild**. X describes Wilpert as a hard worker and a easy-going person, but a “weak” leader of people.

Pretty soon, I began prodding X about the letter and about why he was reaching out ... to Caracas.

I must confess I don't watch teleSUR. I don't even have cable TV. I do follow them on Twitter, at least some of the time. In other words, I am not impartial in this.

I ask X about this. Did it not make him uncomfortable to write to me?

"I am a communist, but so is the person who wrote the email," he says. "The difference is that not respecting his wishes. I want to let the world know about the poor standards in teleSUR, ar has nothing to do with favors for Caracas Chronicles."

I began interviewing X. What is it about teleSUR that makes it so shoddy?

"They value quantity over quality, and don't understand what it takes to build a successful med launch on satellite in HD on July 24th 2015, just when the world is moving towards on-demand watching broadcast transmissions or reading broadcast schedules."

"There is a vocal group in TSE who could make it a success if they were given the freedom to d direction. My only hope is that this vocal group will exert their influence in terms of content, qu gradually accept change. Young people don't want to watch 20/30-minute shows of old academ academics."

"No TSE staff are allowed to communicate directly with any TSE correspondent — they must go voice communication boxes are installed on each workspace, so that Caracas can open a line to emailing the coordinators and editors with editorial instructions and poorly-translated content."

A few days go by. I'm torn as to what to do with this information. Was I being played? Sure, tel quality, but this is dog-bites-man territory. The interesting angle is teleSUR violating revolution: Caracas Chronicles with the story.

X writes back, sending me a screenshot of a ex-colleague's Facebook post. In it, she complains firing her without compensation. "Perhaps naively," she says, "I considered myself to be left-wir later reminded me that the French Revolution was chopping off people's heads a few days after working for a 'progressive' channel would be preferable to a right-wing channel, which is why I

I prod X again – does he realize the implications of coming to CC with this?

"Many at teleSUR would see it as traitorous, but for me it's about spotlighting the inadequate m on first. It will be shared around, and hopefully go on to shake things up."

I ask him about the labor contracts teleSUR draws up in Colombia.

"There are those who feel that flexible Colombian contracts are the best way to keep foreigners opens the door to mistreatment and spontaneous firing. But even Venezuelan employees in Car rotating shifts, there are many who work nights, and only nights. This is terrible for both mental

I begin questioning him about freedom of expression. He seems like a principled person, and in him if he ever felt uncomfortable working for a clear propaganda outlet such as teleSUR.

His answer reminds me of Salvador Allende's **old dictum** about left-wing journalists being in the

"In a world dominated by corporate propaganda outlets," he says, "state involvement in the media would be entirely communal or cooperative, not funded by powerful interests of any kind. But in an informational panorama, popular state media is an essential antidote to corporate media."

"We rely on Russian, Iranian, and Cuban media to expose the atrocities of Western imperialism, and use media to give voice to the working class and social movements, and against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. More than state media, but realistically socialist public media has a role to play as long as the revolution is in its present form."

X gets me thinking. Even though I disagree with his vision of the role of the media, I empathize with his perspective, too many times we consumers feel like corporate media is playing us. That doesn't mean it serves propaganda purposes, but it provides some comfort to know there are people within who care about the product.

The last few days, teleSUR has been tweeting a lot **about the hypocrisy of the USA**. By sanctioning Cuba at the same time that the CIA Torture report has come out, Uncle Sam has left a flank open for teleSUR.

However, teleSUR's own hypocrisy must equally be called into question. By exploiting local workers under "neoliberal" labor contracts, are they not also guilty of hypocrisy?

I contacted teleSUR to ask them about all of this. I received no response.

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