

## **Brazilian Mags Make a Fool of Themselves and Nobody Cares**

Written by Alberto Dines

Wednesday, 13 July 2005 20:38

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The Brazilian media turned on the spotlights, but it hates spotlights on itself. It started the spinning fan, but it hides that it has been splattered with mud. It loves to make noise, as long as it's not noise about itself. This media of ours is a phenomenon.

Agile, creative and daring but, at the same time, painful, neglectful and pusillanimous. The transfiguration of the beautiful into beast happens only in one circumstance: when they are offered a mirror. It is enough to see itself compared to the institutions of the mortal commoner, for our winged media to become witch. Or a tyrannosaur.

It was a cover story in the *Veja* magazine (issue 1,905 of May 18) that deflagrated the scandals cascade that is turning the country head over hills.

But when the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee (CPI) of the Post Office, created due to the repercussion of this article, unveiled on Tuesday (July 5) how this article was obtained and who obtained it, the world's fifth largest weekly behaves as a parochial pamphlet: for modesty or immodesty, it concealed from the readers any reference about this revelation.

In its last edition (1,913, from July 13, page 9), *Veja* behaves as the high vestal of press criticism. It denounces snitching, it defends the diligent investigation, it is even a faithful follower of the *Observatã³rio da Imprensa* (website that monitors the Brazilian media).

If only it wouldn't omit the embarrassing confessions of private eye-videomaker-and-now-journalist Jairo Martins about his promiscuous relations with *Veja*'s BrasÃ-lia bureau.

### **Purchase and Sale Operation**

*Veja* did more than simply hide its sins from the public opinion. The next day, Wednesday, it was the turn of lobbyist Marcos ValÃ©rio to reveal before the CPI and the television cameras that the cover story of the magazine *Isto Ã‰ Dinheiro* with Fernanda Karina's explosive

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interview, scheduled to be published in September of last year, was tabled after Marcos ValÃ©rio's visit to Domingo Alzugaray, owner of the Editora TrÃªs, responsible for the publication of the Isto Ã‰ Dinheiro.

The lobbyist also revealed that he paid 300,000 reais (US\$ 128,000) to journalist Gilberto Mansur, an employee of the publishing house and its consultant.

Less than 24 hours before, in the program ObservatÃ³rio da Imprensa na TV, reporter Leonardo Attuch, the article's author with Fernanda Karina, declared peremptorily that the article was not published in September 2004 for lack of evidence; he denied, also peremptorily, any encounter with Marcos ValÃ©rio.

The deposition of Marcos ValÃ©rio the next day showed that the journalist lied twice: he met Marcos ValÃ©rio and the reason that prevented the publication of that bomb was not the lack of proof, but the weight of the 300,000 reais paid to Editora TrÃªs.

In the last issue of Isto Ã‰ (the Editora TrÃªs flagship publication, dated July 14, on page 29), in a little and cunning note, the weekly tries to defend Gilberto Mansur (who doesn't need to be defended, since he was just an intermediary of a purchase and sale operation) and it removes from the scene the former leading man of photo romance novels Domingo Alzugaray, Editora TrÃªs's current publisher.

### Gentlemanâ€™s Agreement

The magazine Ã‰poca, completely free to show the public opinion the competitors lamentable blunders, was suddenly attacked by an unexpected bout of discretion and solidarity.

It seemed like an English lady who pretends raucousness in order not to reveal the neighbor's peccadillos. With the title "The News Backstage", the magazine quickly describes the transactions of Isto Ã‰, but it ignores totally the investigative modus operandi of Veja (issue 373, July 11, page 38).

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The weeklies modesty on the troubles of their own sector contrasts lively with the prodigality of indignation in the report on the lies of the PT, the Executive and the Legislative. And it was not accidental.

The big newspapers of Wednesday and Thursday (July 6 and 7) also were neglectful or, in the best of the hypotheses, parsimonious in telling the magazines wrongdoings in the Post Office's CPI.

On Wednesday, Folha de S. Paulo published a little note about Veja, Rio's daily O Globo wrote something slightly bigger and O Estado just ignored it. On Thursday, in reference to Isto Ã%, only O Estado registered Marcos ValÃ©rio's embarrassing revelations.

The phlegm was not casual, but part of a pact. It belongs to a historical gentlemanâ€™s agreement, arranged at the beginning of the 1980s (in reaction to the journalists' strike), which resulted in the creation of the ANJ (National Association of Newspapers, which included the Editora Abril that publishes Veja).

Later, due to specific interests, the ANJ begat an offspring, the Aner (National Association of Magazines Publishers) controlled by Abril but presided at the moment by Carlo Alzugaray, son of Domingo.

### **Somebody Is Missing in the CPI**

How can you expect, then, that Aner would condemn the lack of decency of two powerful associates and that the loquacious and belligerent ANJ come in defense of the press good name, if the great pool of the printed media was set up exactly to muffle the criticism?

This corporative performance has a physiologic origin and can be seen in the episode of costly publicity campaign to promote the Chamber of Deputies image, then headed by the awkward JoÃ£o Paulo Cunha (from the PT of SÃ£o Paulo).

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In a truly democratic country, with a truly independent press, it would be inconceivable that the Legislative Power used taxpayer's money to polish the image of an institution that shelters 300 hacks.

Nevertheless, the campaign was launched with noise last year on TV, radio, newspapers and magazines. No journalistic vehicle protested against this abuse. Except the *Observat rio da Imprensa*.

Nobody wanted to do without the pocket change that the Chamber distributed so generously. Now we find out in the CPI that congressman Jo o Paulo Cunha hired one of the agencies of Marcos Val rio to distribute the riches to the media.

10 months ago, if some newspaper or journalist had denounced the promiscuity of the Legislative with the press, part of the scandals could have been aborted.

This last week, it became clear that someone is missing in the Inquiring Committee. But no Committee member will have the courage to serve this summons.

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**Translated from the Portuguese by Arlindo Silva.**