

The doors to the dialogue had been open: Gómez Urrutia

The miners' leader, exiled in Canada, said that Fox and Calderon had damaged so hard Mexico, and explains why he is been pursuit.



MONTREAL, Canada. The self-exiled, and leader of the Mexican Miners' Union, Mr. Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, accuse the ex-presidents Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón of plot together with Grupo Mexico to blame him about a 55 million dollars diversion of resources and to become rich at the expense of the miners.

"It is a completely and absurd lie. It is the product of the sick minds of German Larrea, Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderon and all their partners and accomplices to harm the reputation of the Miners' Union and mine. The only crime we could commit is to defend the workers' rights", said the union leader, exiled since 2006 in Vancouver.

This is one of the two talks that **24 HORAS** had with the leader of the Mexican Miners, Metallurgist, Iron and Steel Workers Union.

- **How do you feel living exiled in Vancouver since 2006?**

I feel very safe and confident, because this is a fight I'm sure we are going to win, all this had been an injustice and a political pursuit which shouldn't ever happened, and I feel confident because I know that at the end the true will come to light, and everyone will know all the facts and all the violations they had committed and the most important is that the spirit of solidarity, loyalty and unit, which had survived during this hard time, will be higher and will continue, in this union and others. I feel hopeful in the sense of that everything will end for good to our Union and all the working-class in Mexico and around the World.

- **When did the pursuit, you're talking about, started?**

There is an explanation about it, actually before the Pasta de Conchos' disaster.

In fact, in my book *Collapse of Dignity*, I describe it clearly. All this conspiracy had been planning for about a year before the Pasta de Conchos tragedy, in February 19th, 2006, in which 65 miners died and still trapped at the bottom of the coal mine, belonging to Grupo Mexico, a German Feliciano Larrea's company. All this happened because of the terrible safety and health conditions, fact that was already reported by the Union like a year before, we even had three strikes asking to solve that, but the company completely ignored them., because it had the support of Vicente Fox; so, when the tragedy happen, the company and Francisco Javier Salazar, labor secretary in that time, decided to close the mine after 5 days of the tragedy, without trying to take the people out of the mine and without knowing if

24 HORAS

EL DIARIO SIN LÍMITES

they were alive or dead, I declared that as an Industrial tragedy.

“That was a Corporative murder, as is known in other countries, and in that moment a political pursuit begun, a dirty and sick media campaign against me, my family, and my partners and even against the Mexican Miners’ Union. All this caused that, after all kind of threats, even death threats by phone and e-mails, and prior recommendation of my politician and union partners, I decide to leave Mexico, to protect the Union, protect the fight and of course to continue with the resistance from the outside, thing that let me live more safe, than if I were in Mexico.

- **You are now exiled in Vancouver, How do you deal with this situation?**

Since the pursuit and all the attacks by the Mexican government begun, the government of Canada decided to never accept any extradition lawsuit based in such lies, manipulations and false accusations, from the Mexican government. In Canada, they never refused to let me in, quite the opposite; they even gave me the residence, protection and safety. Since then, I work here, I lead my Union from Canada, and even with this situation I’ve been unanimously reelected 6 times in six and a half years in several conventions. The international solidarity is not only from the United States, but lots of Canadian Unions, The Canadian Labor Congress, Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. All this had been impressive. I can certainly say that never in the Mexican working movement history, a union leader and a democratic organization like ours, could have such global solidarity, committed with our fight.

- **In Mexico you are accused of a 55 million diversion, and to get rich at the expense of the workers. What can you say about it?**

It is a completely and absurd lie. It is the product of the sick minds of German Larrea, Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderon and all their partners and accomplices to harm the reputation of the Miners’ Union and mine. The only crime we could commit is to defend the workers’ rights,

get them better salaries and benefits during these last 7 years, even before that, to the miners’ union and the workers, the salary is 3 or 4 times over the average. The increase year after year is of 12% to 14%, beside 3% to 3.5% in national average. And of course to demand the best health and safety conditions in workplaces.

All about the diversion is a complete lay, and this matter had been proved since the beginning. The first institution in prove it was the Banking and Securities Commission which by the way, in the 2006 record and official institution decree that the trusteeship had finish clear and correctly, and that there wasn’t any peso diverted, and hide it in the Justice Office, so then it takes 2 years to restart it. It is truly a wickedness of sick minds which had dedicated to destroy a democratic union and a transparent election carried out by the workers.

- **How does the Union works, when you, their leader, are in Vancouver?**

Since the first day I left Mexico, because there were a couple of week’s halftimes, I’d continued leading the Union through different ways, as with the visits of my partners, the responsible civil servants, delegates and local leaders from Mexico, as well as by e-mails, videoconferences, mail and phone calls. Anyway, it had been a regular operation, with the difference that is though a screen and 3106 miles away; but that is not a hitch to the union take its course, and today is more strong and united than ever, we have the major increases in salaries and benefits and we keep recruiting new members every year. Last year, we got 10,000 new members and off course we always keep negotiating to get the best work conditions and the well-being of all the miners, metallurgists, iron and steel workers in Mexico and continue with the democratic and clear Mexico.

- **You wrote the book *The Collapse of Dignity*, which is only available in English, for the moment, and in which you tell us about what is going on with the Union and with yourself. Was it necessary to write this book?**

24 HORAS

EL DIARIO SIN LÍMITES

Absolutely! First, I had to defend my testimony about all this pursuits and violations to the Juridical State. This is a real story, documented and based in proofs, juridical and political resolutions, witnesses, and so much repression, and off course that all this abuse of authority and corruption in Mexico, should be captured as a legacy. This was the main point in my inspiration; it is a book which compiles the most important facts along all these 7 years of conflict which is about ending, it have good and bad characters, even though there are more bad than good. As I was saying, it was a plot, a very shameless fact, workers abandoned until now. There are 63 workers at the bottom of the Pasta de Conchos mine for 7 years now. How could that be possible? In Chile, they lived a tragedy like ours, but there they rescued 33 workers alive 69 days after the disaster, and then, they found them alive 17 days after that and one by one took them out. In Mexico, after 5 days of the tragedy, Germán Larrea's Grupo Mexico closed the mine and left them in there without knowing if they were alive or dead. It is a disgrace that they will have to take as a guilty feeling, above all Felipe Calderón and Vicente Fox whom supported all those corrupted and shameless facts made by Grupo Mexico.

- **When did the Mexican government begun to treat Unions as enemies?**

All this is a kind of movement in Mexico and a generalized policy to repress unions, but this begun to be harder in 2000, when Vicente Fox raised the presidency, he stated that his government was of businessmen, to businessmen and for businessmen, and he left behind the rest of the people, the working-class and the middle class, which are the source of the country's wealth. After Fox, there comes Calderon, who in an important business dinner he claimed that unions are like the society's cancer and they should be removed. How a President could say something like that about the working-class, which is the source of the country's wealth? Nowadays, there is not technology, or equipment, no matter how modern could be that could generate or produce the wealth produced by manpower. Then, the anti-unions campaign begun, this 12 years

campaign was not only against us, but it started with us because we are the bigger union in private industry, the most democratic union and the one with the greatest tradition, they could think that if we could against us they could against anyone. They went after the Electricians Union, the pilots, teachers, farmers and lots of democratic organizations. In Mexico and other countries, there is a traditionalist tendency against the democratic unions.

- **How do you consider Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderón and now the current president, Enrique Peña Nieto?**

I think that Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón had been the worst governors in Mexico's history and had damaged so hard the country, they generated unemployment, insecurity, or at least it hardly increased in their period. The unemployment, the lack of opportunities, the discrimination and the so low salaries is a wrong model which in a long term will get several social problems. It was the result of a wrong strategy and their lack of preparation, with an historical view of statistics they never had.

As regarding with Enrique Peña Nieto, he and his government had claimed that they are opened to the dialogue, in a respectful way to solve the conflicts in Mexico. We hope it could be soon, because it had passed 6 months since he began his government. There are good intentions, good dialogue, and the doors to the dialogue, which were close in last governments, are open now. He hope that they accomplish with what they said and that they could be respectful with the people's will, with the union democracy and freedom, and off course the compromise of create more opportunities, justice and equality for the Mexican people.