

HOW FREE IS 'PRESS FREEDOM' IN BOLIVIA AND VENEZUELA?

We often hear about 'Freedom of the Press' and do not get me wrong - I support it 100% in theory, but have you ever taken the time to consider the other mitigating factors that introduce biases into reporting when the media is owned by the elites?

Take Bolivia for example, a country of very poor and very rich, and no middle class to speak of. In the English-speaking media more negative reports are circulated by the so called 'Free press' of western media about President Evo Morales Ayma and his peaceful socialist indigenous revolutionary government than anything else.

We are told that he is promoting Cocaine, that he is Marxist Atheist, and that he cannot govern the country properly.

But are we ever told that all the preceding Presidents and governments of Bolivia have been run by the far right conservative party who represent in truth and in fact the Rich minority in Bolivia?

Are we ever informed that the Rich people in Bolivia are a non-indigenous clique who own all the big business here - including the dominant media-houses...the same ones who supply their lies and propoganda unquestioningly swallowed by foreign press?

Are we ever informed that many of the former (and non-indigenous) Presidents were graduates of the infamous School of the Americas in the USA where all of the most brutal anti-poor post military politicians in Latin America were indoctrinated?

Are we ever informed that one Conservative Party (the rich opposition to the present administration of the poor) governor in Bolivia owns 50% of the land that comprises 1 of 9 regions of the Republic of Bolivia?

The rich opposition mounts protests with 40 or 50 of their supporters blocking bridges and highways and broadcasts the footage via the media they own themselves - and cry that they are protesting for freedom and democracy, but where were these media houses when thousands of poor Indians were protesting for true freedom and democracy against the previous rich Conservative Party governments who ordered the military to massacre the protesters - on several occasions?

Are we ever informed that the previous presidents of Bolivia earned a monthly salary of 50,000 Bolivian dollars but President Morales has cut his own salary to \$15,000 Bolivian dollars (US\$1 = \$7.50 Bolivian Dollars) and used the savings from his & his other Government Ministers who also took a drastic pay cut - to build clinics and schools in rural areas?

Are we ever informed that this allegedly incapable government of poor Indigenous Indians have achieved in their first year in office a Budget surplus - something that was in perpetual deficit under the previous rich Spanish descendant 'capable' governments?

I do not know of any Government in the world that have ever or would ever do the same as this first Indian government in the post Columbian Western Hemisphere, yet according to the opposition media in Bolivia - who feed a steady stream of lies to the rest of the world, nothing positive has occurred in Bolivia since the poor have democratically won office.

Since I arrived in Bolivia on Thursday April 19th 2007 I have spent all my free time touring the countryside in el Altiplano and the city of La Paz, and every single poor Bolivian I have questioned has said that their lives are much better now under the government of President Evo Morales Ayma, are we ever informed that the rich in Bolivia comprise about 1% of the population yet they control 99% of the private economy and the media?

Venezuela suffers a similar problem, with the privately owned media of the wealthy claiming that nothing good has occurred under President Chavez, but ask any number of poor Venezuelans (who are also the majority there) and you will hear that their lives have improved tremendously. As one would expect, the wealthy have an entirely opposite view in both country's cases.

It is impossible to cater to the needs of all in any large society, the most powerful country on Earth still has not eliminated poverty within its own borders, so to demonise countries like Bolivia and Venezuela for catering to the 'have-nots' at the expense of the 'haves' is very hypocritical, the 'gravy train' of the rich MUST come to an end for there to be equality in this poverty wracked world.

For the record, the peaceful Indigenous revolutionary government is neither Marxist Atheist nor narco-trafficking and is more capable of governing this country than any administration in history to have survived the European occupation of the Americas.