

Chavez had a 'managed democracy'?

Back in the bad old days of the Soviet Union, political leaders were routinely 'elected' with 99 per cent of the vote. That's because



candidates had been pre-selected by the local Communist party and the trade unions under the direction of the local party organization, so after the six-week 'election' campaign they were joyously declared victors.

Former Venezuelan demagogue Hugo Chavez, who died of cancer last week, wasn't quite as blatant as the Soviets. He did allow some opposition, although he banned anybody from running who he thought might actually have a chance of winning.

He also either closed down or took over any media which criticized him, and at one point manufactured murder conspiracy charges against his country's leading bankers so that he could completely take over Venezuela's economy.

He was a master of what the independent U.S. National Endowment for Democracy (NED) calls 'managed democracy,' the same system currently used by Russia's Vladimir Putin and Egypt's Mohammed Morsi.

Since his death, many western newspapers referred to Chavez as a 'dictator,' prompting several prominent Canadian left-wing extremists to fire off letters pointing out that Chavez actually 'won' four consecutive elections in that country.

Well-known radical feminist Judy Rebick 'my long-time debating partner on the former CBC Newsworld show 'Face Off?' sent a letter to The Globe and Mail dissing 'the right-wing media' and concluding: 'In the 2006 election, he (Chavez) won with 63 per cent of the popular vote; in 2012 with 55 per cent of the popular vote.

'You may disagree with Mr. Chavez's 21st-century socialism policies, but please do not describe him as a dictator,' writes Rebick.

As somebody who has been writing about politics in this country for well over 40 years, I have long observed that apart from the obvious ideological disagreements on policy issues, one difference noted between most right-wingers (where I sit) and most left-wingers is the left's penchant to support their ideological soulmates, regardless of any other circumstances.

During the Soviet reign of Joseph Stalin, for example, many prominent lefties wrote glowing accounts of his stewardship. Yet despite the fact he has proven to be one of history's most despotic rulers 'responsible for more deaths than Hitler, which is not the company anybody wants to keep ' many lefties are still loathe to criticize him.

No, I'm not comparing Chavez to Stalin, but only because it's a matter of degree.

When the left rallies around despots such as Chavez ' and they've been very busy this past week ' they inevitably invoke the name of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, who seized power ' aided by the CIA ' in a coup d'etat from an elected socialist leader, Salvador Allende, in 1973.

Many on the right did initially endorse Pinochet, but, given his horrid record in office, you'd be hard-pressed to find much support for him now.

In my experience, credible right-wingers are just as ready to dump on Pinochet as they are on Chavez or Castro or any other despot, left or right. The lefties, alas, seem, for the most part, to direct their venom only at right-wing dictators. Why is that?

We are told that Chavez poured billions of oil money into making a better life for his people, and statistics show that under his rule poverty was dramatically reduced, along with unemployment.

But statistics also show that the gap between the poor and the rich and middle class declined largely because those two latter classes became poorer. Under Chavez, the murder rate doubled and he created his own 125-strong militia to 'implement' his policies without the bother of running them past elected state and municipal governments.

In the meantime, left-leaning governments in Brazil, Colombia, Peru and Chile have prospered, even without the billions in oil

revenues which Chavez squandered.

There have even been a spate of letters from various lefties claiming that compared to our guy, Stephen Harper, Chavez was a model of democracy and compassion. Really?

But then, when it comes to Harper, pretty much anything goes from the left.

A recent negative review in the Globe of CBC personality Mary Walsh's show, Dancing with Rage, said the highlight of the evening was her shot at Harper, whom she described as a 'crypto-fascist' whose speeches 'sound even better in the original German.'

In other words, Harper is a Nazi.

That's really funny, eh?

This particular reviewer seemed to think it was.