



THE HYPOCRISIES OF MARIO VARGAS LLOSA

Defender of Human Rights?

By VICENTE NAVARRO

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Since Mario Vargas Llosa was awarded the 2010 Nobel Prize in Literature, we have seen his beatification in the conservative-liberal media, presenting him as a fighter for human rights worldwide and especially in Latin America. In one press report after another, he is hailed as the great defender of human rights and freedom. But Mario Vargas Llosa's commitment to human rights is extremely selective. He has criticized the government of Hugo Chavez extensively, presenting the Venezuela president as a gross violator of human rights who represses all types of freedoms, including freedom of the press. He has also criticized Chavez and his government for tolerating or advocating violence against his opponents. The same types of criticism are aimed at the Evo Morales government in Bolivia.

Vargas Llosa has been remarkably silent, however, about the much worse violations of human rights in Colombia under the government of Alvaro Uribe. Uribe's army has killed nearly a thousand people, identified inaccurately as "terrorists" (a well-known false positive),

and Vargas Llosa has said nothing. Colombia is also the country where more trade unionists have been assassinated than anywhere else in the world and Vargas Llosa has said nothing. In Honduras, the current government – formed through a military coup – has been killing opponents, journalists, and trade unionists, and Vargas Llosa has said nothing. He actually justified the military coup. And regarding his supposed championship of freedom of the press, Venezuela and Bolivia have much more diversity of the press than Colombia and Honduras – and Vargas Llosa, again, has said nothing about this lack of press diversity in those countries. As a matter of fact, he has presented both countries' governments as great defenders of freedom.

It's obvious that Mario Vargas Llosa is using the human rights issue as part of his right-wing crusade against left-wing governments. Actually, in Spain (he has Spanish citizenship), he was until recently a member of the right-wing Popular Party (PP). This party was founded by members of the fascist state led by General Franco, and it recently applauded the trial of Judge Garçon by the Spanish Supreme Court for trying to bring to trial the crimes of the Franco dictatorship. The case against Garçon was started when he was denounced by the fascist party, *la Falange*. During the whole process, Vargas Llosa remained silent.

He was also very close to the Aznar government. Aznar was the president of the right-wing party (PP) who supported George W. Bush in the invasion of Iraq. The PP is a great defender of the Tea Party of the United States. Vargas Llosa has referred to Aznar as "one of the great statesmen in the twentieth century" (*20 Minutes*, Madrid, July 6, 2007). Aznar's politics were extremely reactionary, in both the economic and social areas; not surprisingly he was described by the U.S. journal *Foreign Policy* as "one of the five worst ex-presidents of governments in the world." Vargas Llosa, the great admirer of Aznar,

has also received the Irving Kristol award of the American Enterprise Institute. So, to write as does *The Economist* that Vargas Llosa sympathizes with left-of-center parties in Spain is inaccurate in the extreme. It demonstrates this liberal magazine's incompetence or manipulation (neither of which is uncommon in this weekly).

Vargas Llosa recently abandoned the PP because of the party's closeness to the Church. He has now become a member of a new, small Jacobin party that defends imposition of the Spanish language (Castilian) on all regions of Spain (including regions where Spanish is not the primary language like Catalonia and the Basque country), denying the plurality of Spain. Catalan is the language of Catalonia, where I was born. (I remember well the first time I was taken to police headquarters in Barcelona in 1944, at the age of 7 years, when I spit on a policeman for having slapped my face because I was speaking my mother tongue, Catalan. He shouted at me: "Don't speak as a dog! Speak the language of the Spanish empire!" – which was, of course, Spanish.)

The Spanish parliament recently accepted a new Constitution for Catalonia, declaring this part of Spain bilingual, with a preference for Catalan. The party to which Vargas Llosa belongs wants to rescind that authorization, denying the right of Catalans to speak primarily in Catalan. It is interesting, here, that *The Economist* applauds Vargas Llosa's sympathies for imposing Castilian as the primary language in Catalonia: "Vargas Llosa opposes the petty nationalism of the country's periphery." Vargas Llosa would deny Catalans such a basic human right as speaking their own language! He believes that some cultures are superior to others. Thus Catalan is secondary to a superior culture: the Spanish-language culture. Remarkable! And he is presented as the defender of human rights.

As if all this were not enough, Vargas Llosa has written favorably in the Spanish press about the U.S. Tea Party, saying that, despite its many flaws, this is a healthy libertarian movement – democratic, patriotic, and anti-state. Because he has always espoused strongly ultraliberal views, he can identify with the Tea Party’s anti-state position. He has always sided with the interests of big money, sharing its view of liberty – liberty to do whatever it damn well pleases without any state constraints. This is what Nobel laureate Vargas Llosa, the great defender of liberty, stands for.