

The Castro Effect

Ideologies do not exist in a vacuum. They are Essential to meet the problems of a particular region as it exists with all its diversities and complexities. Castro, being a living legend of Cuban Revolution continues to inspire progressives throughout the world. His retirement from active politics is not really the end of what Cubans have achieved during the last five decades—self-reliance and national self-respect—challenging the sole superpower in the world. In truth Castro had already ceded his powers to his brother on 31 July, 2006 because of ill-health. So his formal departure from presidency and military command does not mean much in real terms in the difficult existence of Cuba which sometimes sounds anachronistic in the context of today's international crisis.

When the Soviet Union collapsed creating tremendous hardships for Cuba otherwise heavily dependent on Russian material help for many sectors of the economy, the enemies of Cuba thought Castro's Cuba would be a piece of museum within a short period. But things did not develop the way the White House strategists wanted. Bush's men are a gloomy bunch at the moment as they simply do not know how to destroy the Cuban model of alternative development that could have long-lasting impact on many developing economies even in the absence of Castro.

True, Cuban model cannot be repeated in most third world countries with identical results but it's an alternative model, no doubt, and that matters. Not that the "Tricontinental Phase" (i.e. the early phase) of Cuban Revolution succeeded in promoting a powerful political and ideological orientation for the international communist movement. In essence, it was more Latin America specific. But self-reliance induced development, largely in isolation, showed by Cuban communists under the dynamic stewardship of Castro in the face of continuing American blockade and Russian withdrawal at critical moments, has no parallel in recent history.

Castro's Cuba has so far encountered hostilities from ten American presidents. And American policy towards Cuba will remain unchanged even if the anti-Bush lobby gets mandate in the next presidential election. They need a pro-Washington puppet regime in Havana but Cubans are unlikely to oblige Bush's successor.

In UN America remains isolated on the issue of Cuban embargo. Last year as many as 184 countries voted in favour of a General Assembly resolution demanding that the US lift the 45-year-old restrictions on international trade with Cuba. The 198-member General Assembly has adopted 16 similar resolutions since 1992. On the Cuban question, America's friends in the General Assembly were Israel, Marshal Islands and Palau. Even America's European co-passengers agree not to disagree on the popular notion that the sanctions against Cuba violate international law and the UN charter.

Washington has spent billions of dollars during the last 45 years to crush the spirit of Cuban revolution without success. How Cuba avoided a nuclear holocaust because of superpower rivalry in 1961 is now history. Bush's genocidal blockade, his support of terrorism targeting Cuban regime, his wet-foot and dry-

foot policy, his protection of the worst terrorists of Latin American hemisphere, his punishment of the Five Cuban Patriots who denounced the dangers for citizens of the United States and other countries to be killed in mid-flight, are now being condemned even by Bush's trusted loyalists. This became explicitly clear when the European Union voted in favour of the UN resolution. The embargo provisions contained in the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act and the 1996 Helms-Burton Act put limits on EU countries' trade relations with Cuba. The commercial and financial blockade imposed by the US since 1962 has caused losses of over \$89 billion, which at the current dollar value, account for no less than \$222 billion. The US has so far ignored with arrogance and political blindness the 15 UN resolutions calling for the lifting of the blockade.

For Cuba sovereignty is not negotiable. Interestingly the most crucial UN support for Cuba came just a week after Bush described Cuba as a 'tropical gulag' and signalled his administration's readiness to take more hostile measures. Communists in India never took Cuban Revolution seriously because they enjoyed the pleasure of imitating Russian and Chinese models. Model apart, Cuba's resolve to resist the most powerful superpower's aggressive designs, just 90 miles from US shores, even in the face of perennial economic and political attrition, deserves solidarity action because Bush's crew cannot be trusted to silently listen UN resolutions. □□□