

Socialism strikes back, revolution is in the air



By Danny Hardiman

Living in Western society, one can sometimes feel estranged or even removed from the global mood.

Things that should have impact, don't. Things that should stir our emotions, don't. An earthquake in Pakistan? Cause for a meek platitude. Several dead in Baghdad? A sniff for the sentimental few. We are told the world is in motion, that we are heading for a major global tipping point. Yet we are immersed in celebrities' lives, in cyber culture and FaceBook. The fire is gone. The passion has rotted. Advertisements, marketing ploys, bad pop music screams at us daily. Bombings, disease, disasters are mere events to fill up the pages, to make us believe we're living in some kind of information golden age. It's so easy to be distracted. Why bother? Just pretend everything is okay. Believe me, it really is.

In 2002, Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez made headlines when millions took to the streets, demanding his return after being ousted in a slick, pre-planned military coup. I forgot about it. So did you, probably. After all, governments and revolts come and go; recently, the Middle East has seen two long-standing, "untouchable" leaders removed by the power of popular protest. If it doesn't impact directly on "our" national or individual interests, it's all just an interesting titbit to share around the dinner table.

It's a similar story; you've heard of the Cuban Revolution. You've heard of the missile crisis, the Bay of Pigs fiasco and the terse talk between Castro and the various US representatives. You've heard people mention Stalinism, communist dictatorship and the alleged suppression of freedom. The truth is, Cuba has remained true to socialism for a reason: because capitalism and "free" markets really only work in theory.

Heading south now, and Bolivia elects Evo Morales, an indigenous activist, as president in 2006. Then Ecuador elects leftist Rafael Correa in 2007. It's spreading. The red banner of socialism is sometimes pink, as in Ecuador, sometimes red-hot and fiery, as in Venezuela.

When did this happen? Did anyone notice that South America, a continent better known for its salsa, cheap cocaine and oppressive dictators (Pinochet, anyone?) had suddenly become a hot-bed for socialist fever, right beneath our noses and with barely a mention in the *Daily Telegraph*, or Channel Seven? "Socialism strikes back" is not quite the headline they were looking for.

The US corporate empire is scrambling to combat the revival of socialism. It thought the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was the end of history and the end of socialism.



Above: More than a million people march in support of the revolutionary government led by Venezuela's socialist president Hugo Chavez, August 2004. Below: Tahrir (Liberation) Square, Cairo, Egypt. A people's power revolution forced the resignation of dictator Hosni Mubarak on February 11. Junior officers refused to carry out orders to fire on protesters.

Now, socialism is a fiery fiesta of the oppressed in the Americas. Africa and Asia, the double A batteries to supposedly recharge the capitalist machine, are starting to awaken, to open their eyes, to start to feel.

We've seen what can happen. President Mubarak, the Egyptian strongman, ousted by human passion — the means of drawing a line between repression and expression, between freedom and tolerance, and between what is just and what is inexcusable. And all it took was for someone to strike the match.

Capitalism creates poverty, exploitation and unsustainable consumerism. For two decades, global capitalism has run rampant. There have been attempts to reform it, but none have succeeded in humanising it. Why? Because what was really needed was a revolution, a chance to overthrow the existing system for a social order that has given Cuba free health care and education and the strength of conviction to resist the noose of US trade sanctions: socialism.

Finally, socialism has begun to revive in the post-Soviet era. Once again it has become a word that signifies hope, strength

and spirit, a cause embraced by millions as a genuine alternative to the failures of capitalism in Latin America. Venezuela and Cuba are leading efforts to unite the continent under socialist principles. This is no longer something that can be simply ignored, or relegated to a side column in an editorial.

The time to feel again is now. The time to think, to hear, to listen, to act — is now. Because things are happening, and they are happening quicker than most of us realise. The US may still be the world's biggest economy, but it's no longer the mighty beast it once was. Its foreign policy has proved costly. The dollar is faltering. China is growing. Russia is growing. Most importantly, the Americas, long the US imperial backyard, is getting its act together and reviving hope in genuine socialism.

This is a description of what is happening — right here, right now, just across the waves from where you are now. Read, feel and act. The time for pretence is over. Believe me, everything is not okay with capitalism.

Not in the slightest.



Fidel Castro

They talk about the failure of socialism but where is the success of capitalism in Africa, Asia and Latin America?

425 million people suffer chronic hunger

\$1.5 trillion annual military expenditure

43% richest 1% share of global wealth

