

7M-CASTRO

CASTRO SAYS CUBANS WILL NEVER RETURN TO THE PAST

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BY LIONEL MARTIN.

HAVANA, JULY 27, REUTER - CUBAN PRESIDENT FIDEL CASTRO SAID IN HIS ANNUAL JULY 26 SPEECH LAST NIGHT THAT WHILE THE ENEMIES OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION MIGHT BE ENCOURAGED BY HIS REGIMES ERRORS AND ITS ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, THE CUBAN PEOPLE WOULD NEVER RETURN TO THE PAST.

"WE HAVE INDEED MADE ERRORS BUT WE HAVE HAD THE COURAGE AND THE HONESTY TO RECOGNIZE THEM," CASTRO SAID.

IN HIS TWO-HOUR SPEECH, CASTRO MADE BRIEF REFERENCE TO THE SO-CALLED PROCESS OF RECTIFICATION WHICH IS AIMED AT OVERCOMING INEFFICIENCY, CORRUPTION AND APATHY IN ALL SPHERES OF CUBAN SOCIETY. CASTRO SAID, "TO RECTIFY IS TO FIND NEW SOLUTIONS FOR OLD PROBLEMS."

THE 60-YEAR-OLD CUBAN LEADER OMITTED ANY REFERENCE TO CIA ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES IN CUBA WHICH HAVE BEEN THE THEME OF A MAJOR MEDIA CAMPAIGN HERE SINCE EARLY JULY.

DURING THE CAMPAIGN, FILMS WERE SHOWN ON CUBAN TV WHICH INCLUDED SCENES OF U.S. DIPLOMATS IN HAVANA ALLEGEDLY PARTICIPATING IN ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES.

CASTRO, WHILE NOT MENTIONING NAMES, MADE REFERENCE TO CUBAN AIR FORCE GEN. RAFAEL DEL PINO, WHO DEFECTED TO THE UNITED STATES IN A SMALL PLANE ON MAY 28 AND TO LUIS ORLANDO DOMINGUEZ, A MEMBER OF THE CUBAN COMMUNIST PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE WHO WAS JAILED IN MAY ON CHARGES OF STEALING GOVERNMENT FUNDS.

"IMPERIALISM MIGHT FEEL GRATIFIED WHEN SOME BETRAY THEIR COUNTRY OR BETRAY THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE REVOLUTION," CASTRO SAID. BUT HE INSISTED THAT "THE TRAITORS AND THEIR MASTERS" WOULD NEVER CONVINCe THE CUBAN PEOPLE TO RETURN "TO THE DEGRADATION AND INHUMAN PART."

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THE CUBAN LEADER, DRESSED IN HIS CUSTOMARY OLIVE-GREEN ARMY UNIFORM, DEVOTED MORE THAN HALF OF HIS SPEECH TO THE POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE REVOLUTION IN THE FIELDS OF EDUCATION, PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE.

HE SAID THAT THE REVOLUTION HAD ELIMINATED UNEMPLOYMENT, PROSTITUTION, GAMBLING, ILLITERACY, GAREFOOT CHILDREN, THE SICK WITHOUT DOCTORS OR MEDICINES AND RACIAL AND SEX DISCRIMINATION.

IN REFERENCE TO THE 27-YEAR "FEROCIOUS U.S. ECONOMIC BLOCKAGE" AGAINST CUBA, CASTRO SAID "PERHAPS WE SHOULD THANK THE BLOCKADE BECAUSE IT HAS TAUGHT US HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS.

CASTRO SAID THAT CUBA IS "ONE OF THE FEW COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD THAT IS ABLE TO LIVE WITHOUT ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE EMPIRE." IN OBVIOUS REFERENCE TO THE UNITED STATES, HE SAID THAT IN SPITE OF THE ECONOMIC EMBARGO "WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SURVIVE AND ADVANCE.

CASTRO VERY BRIEFLY PRAISED THE SOVIET UNION FOR ITS ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL AND MILITARY AID OVER THE PAST 27 YEARS. HE SAID "IT IS BECAUSE OF THE USSR THAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GO SO FAR."

HE ALSO SPOKE OF CUBAS "INTERNATIONALIST SOLIDARITY" WITH NATIONS OF THE THIRD WORLD. "TO BE AN INTERNATIONALIST," HE SAID, IS TO PAY OUR OWN DEBT TO HUMANITY."

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