

## 11 July Protests in Cuba: A Personal Narrative of Events

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Abstract: On Sunday July 11 anti-government protests took place simultaneously in towns and cities throughout Cuba; the first violent protests there for 27 years. The international media depicted mass opposition to the Cuban government, police repression of peaceful protests and a regime in crisis. Cuban American leaders and US politicians called for US intervention, while President Biden labeled Cuba a “failed state”. The Cuban government and its supporters pointed to media manipulation, called out hypocrisy, emphasized the context of economic hardship caused by increased US sanctions compounded by the global pandemic, and implicated US-funded regime change programs, including a social media war on Cuba. This chapter gives a personal account of what happened on July 11 and the following week, juxtaposing external commentary and internal response. It points out that battle lines are being drawn and more conflict is inevitable.

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On Sunday 11 July, anti-government protests, apparently coordinated via social media, took place simultaneously in towns and cities throughout Cuba. In several places, including San Antonio de los Baños on the outskirts of Havana, and in Matanzas, where COVID-19 cases had been surging, protests turned violent, with windows smashed, shops looted, cars overturned, rocks thrown, and people assaulted. These were the first violent protests in Cuba since the *maleconazo* of 1994, 27 years ago. The international media depicted mass opposition to the Cuban government, police repression of peaceful protests and a regime in crisis. Cuban American leaders and US politicians, called for US intervention, while US President Joseph Biden labelled Cuba as a “failed state”. The Cuban government and its supporters pointed to media manipulation, called out hypocrisy, emphasized the context of economic hardship caused by increased US sanctions compounded by the global pandemic, and implicated US-funded regime change programs, including a social media war on Cuba.

Commentators are unlikely to agree on how to narrate the events of 11 July in Cuba; some will depict the protests as a “cause”, others as an “effect”; some will consider them “surprising”, others “inevitable”; some will describe them as “internal and spontaneous”, others as “externally orchestrated”; some will portray them as peaceful, others as violent. Facts do not speak for themselves; they take place within a context and are filtered and ranked by the analyst. I happened to be in Cuba on that day, and this is an account of events as I understand them.

### Sunday 11 July

Between 10-11am on 11 July, in the church park in San Antonio de los Baños, a town on the outskirts of Havana, residents answering a post on Facebook gathered ostensibly to protest recent electricity blackouts and, while they were at it, to demand regime change. The Facebook administrator’s post mentioned the lack of electricity, but his pre-prepared slogans for the protest were overtly political, or anti-communist, rather than expressing practical demands.<sup>1</sup> Using the pseudonym Danilo Roque with the decapitated head of the Cuban President as his profile picture, the

Facebook administrator had called for Cubans to take to the streets several times since 2019, to no avail. ‘Then the situation worsened with COVID-19 and the lack of medicines’, he told a journalist for *El Estornudo* website. ‘And so we were waiting for the opportune occasion for the people to come out to express their feelings’. Occurring during summer and the COVID-19 surge, the electricity blackouts created that ‘opportune occasion’, said Roque. ‘My team and I decided that this was the moment to strike, given that the government was concentrating on COVID-19’.<sup>2</sup>

They marched through the neighborhood, attempting to enter the local police station, before returning to the park, and soon stones and bottles were thrown. Streamed live on social media, the protest was amplified by members of the external and domestic opposition, including Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara of the San Isidro Movement, who urged the population to take to the streets across the island.<sup>3</sup> Within the hour thousands of Cubans had heeded that call. In some places, protestors looted shops, walking off with washing machines, mattresses, and bottles of rum. Cars were overturned, and fights broke out with citizens or police who confronted the protestors. Footage from Havana shows youths striding through the streets clutching rocks or throwing them at police patrol cars. In some places, Cuban ‘black berets’, special forces or plain clothes state security agents poured onto the streets and arrests were made. In others places few police were seen and the protests did not turn violent. In Cárdenas, a town in Matanzas province near the resort city of Varadero, stones were thrown at the Julio Aristegui Villamil children’s hospital, terrifying infant COVID-19 patients, their parents, and medical staff.<sup>4</sup>

While these mobilizations appeared to be spontaneous, Peruvian media analyst Jota, points to evidence of pre-planning and coordination. Placards displayed the logo of the organization “Cuba Decide”, an exile organization set up in Miami in 2015, and the same political slogans echoed from one place to the next. Claiming to have “scrupulously” analyzed the footage available, Jota states that protests of 100 to 500 people took place in 12 towns and cities. He also claimed that the twitter accounts of Rosa María Payá and the Fundación para la Democracia Panamericana, which are linked to Cuba Decide, had published edited graphic material about the protests “flyers, videographics, denunciations about detentions” since 9am. that same day.<sup>5</sup>

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel responded to events on Sunday 11 July like Fidel Castro during the *maleconazo* in 1994. He arrived at San Antonio de los Baños shortly after 2pm. Footage shows him speaking to local people and the press, and leading a march through the streets, accompanied by members of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party (CCP) and local CCP leaders and residents. He acknowledged their frustrations, with the electricity blackouts, medicine shortages and surging COVID-19 cases. The temporary electricity blackout was due to repairs being carried out on generators, he explained, adding that the issues were linked as the need to prioritize the electrical and medical supply to the new centers, which had been opened due to the increase in COVID-19 patients, had exacerbated the scarcity experienced by the general population.

In the midst of this situation, he stated, the “Cuban Mafia” had paid YouTubers and social media influencers to create a campaign, using as a pretext the situation in Cuba, particularly in Matanzas, to call for demonstrations throughout the country. He talked about people being confused and manipulated by social media, “you know that social media works with emotions and people have limits, we understand, and they are living with scarcity.” There are even confused revolutionaries, he said, who went out to express their dissatisfaction. “But there is also a group of people, counterrevolutionaries, mercenaries, paid by the US government, or indirectly paid through US government agencies to set up this type of demonstration.” The streets belong to the revolutionaries, he asserted to applause, warning “*gusanos*” and mercenaries that if they broke the law they would be

dealt with. “I put myself first among the many here willing to give our lives for the revolution.” We can improve things in Cuba, he said, but we need the US blockade to be lifted.<sup>6</sup>

At 4pm. Díaz-Canel appeared on state television to inform the public about the protests, echoing the points made in San Antonio earlier, concluding with the similar declaration: “We are calling on all the revolutionaries in the country, all the communists, to take to the streets in any of the places where these provocations are going to take place. Today, from now, and in all these days, to confront it decisively, firmly, with courage... the order to combat is given, revolutionaries to the streets.”<sup>7</sup> Some Cubans had already gathered outside places of work and education after seeing reports of the protests on social media. Following Díaz-Canel’s televised speech, thousands of Cubans took to the streets in towns and cities around the country in support of the government and Cuban socialism. According to Cuban reports, prior to Díaz-Canel’s live broadcast, 19 state-owned shops and establishments had been attacked; during the half hour of his televised speech another 10 were ransacked and after 4.30pm., 15 more shops were vandalized.<sup>8</sup> Most of those shops were in Matanzas.

The anti-government protests had ended within hours and the streets were back under control of the authorities and government supporters. Internet access via mobile phone data was suspended, presumably to prevent social media being used to coordinate more protests.

### **Monday 12 July**

On Monday 12 July, there was a tense calm, with life continuing as normal. Cubans gathered outside some workplaces, like the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television on La Rampa (Calle 23) in Havana, ready to defend them in case of attack. Travelling across Havana on public transport and in taxis, I heard car radios and saw workplace televisions tuned into a live four-hour broadcast by the President, government Ministers and CCP leaders who discussed the events of the previous day, the shortages and the obstacles each ministry faced in the context of the pandemic and suffocating sanctions, and denounced US intervention.

The Cuban Minister of Energy and Mines explained the causes of the electricity blackouts suffered in San Antonio over the previous days. Díaz-Canel, an electrical engineering graduate, added context explaining how US sanctions, particularly the imposition of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, had generated economic difficulties and fuel shortages.<sup>9</sup> Cuba’s national electrical system operates with different technologies, or generators, which require different types of fuel, he said, but delays in obtaining specific fuels led to overloading other generators. There were also problems with getting spare parts for repairs, and with the finances to purchase them, both a result of the intensification of financial persecution through sanctions introduced under the Trump administration. Again, he explained how the need to prioritize the electrical supply to hospitals under strain from the COVID-19 pandemic and patient isolation centers put additional stress of Cuba’s generation capacity.

Another violent protest took place in Arroyo Naranjo, another town on the outskirts of Havana, in which one person died, and others sustained injuries, including police. It was reported on state news.<sup>10</sup> Small skirmishes took place over the following days. Police began arresting people at their homes who had been identified as participating. Given the abundance of film footage posted on social media by participants, it cannot have been difficult to identify them.

Many Cubans began to download and connect to the internet using a VPN (Virtual Private Network) called Psiphon, described by Bloomberg as an “anti-censorship tool supported by the US government to evade blackouts of social media such as Facebook”.<sup>11</sup> Psiphon is funded by the US Agency for

Global Media's Open Technology Fund and in 2010 began providing services to the US Department of State, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the US Broadcasting Board of Governors, a US government agency which manages Radio Martí and Television Martí, which were set up to broadcast propaganda to Cuba in violation of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) regulations.

## **Tuesday 13 July**

At an international press conference on Tuesday 13 July, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez presented evidence of a new media campaign financed from the United States to foster internal opposition. His accusations included the following: On 15 June, the hashtag #SOSCuba was launched by a US company the same day it was authorized to receive Florida state funding. On 5 July, hashtags appeared calling for a 'humanitarian corridor' or 'humanitarian intervention' in Cuba. *Bots* and *troll farms* were used to disseminate messages on Twitter through false accounts, including one doing five retweets per second on 10 and 11 July. Twitter users had changed their geolocation to appear to be in Cuba.<sup>12</sup> Similar evidence had been highlighted the previous day by Spanish analyst Julián Macías Tovar who, as Ed Agustin reported for *The Guardian*, "found that the #SOSCuba campaign had been driven by accounts linked to Atlas Network, a free-market consortium of more than 500 organizations that have received funding from ExxonMobil and the Koch brothers. Twitter accounts of Atlas Network members have been involved in bot or troll center campaigns in recent elections in Peru and Ecuador, as well as the 2019 civic-military coup in Bolivia."<sup>13</sup> Macías Tovar also revealed that the first twitter account to use the hashtag #SOSCuba in relation to the COVID-19 surge in Matanzas had a Spanish flag in its biography. The number of tweets using that hashtag peaked for two days before the 11 July protest and "one of the main accounts was that of Antonneti from the Fundación Libertad de Argentina."<sup>14</sup>

## **Wednesday 14 July**

Internet access improved beginning on Wednesday 14 July. The worried messages I received from people outside Cuba and the foreign media reports that I could now read indicated the extraordinary misreporting underway about the extent and significance of the protests. This was so blatant that even Reuters published a "fact check" article to correct reports circulating the image of the 2018 May Day parade, with hundreds of thousands pouring into Revolution Square in Havana, mislabeled as the anti-government protests from 3 days earlier.<sup>15</sup> Numerous mainstream outlets, including the *New York Times* and *El País* published photos of government supporters in the streets, describing them as opposition activists.<sup>16</sup> Photos of protests in Egypt, sports celebrations in Argentina, looting in South Africa, and police repression of Catalan activists were all presented as showing the Cuban protests of 11 July.

In an interview with Fox News, the Mayor of Miami, Francis Suárez, called for the option of airstrikes against Cuba to be "explored", citing US military intervention in Panama and Kosovo, and the assassination of Osama Bin Laden in sovereign Pakistan as relevant precedents. Footage played during the interview, showed Cubans marching in support of the revolution in the background, with the July 26<sup>th</sup> Movement flags of supporters of the Revolution and the messages on their placards blurred out, suggesting intent.<sup>17</sup> US Senator Ted Cruz was interviewed with the same footage behind.<sup>18</sup>

On social media there were accusations of mass disappearances, systemic torture and even missing children. Photos of unnamed victims were presented, which were then identified by social media analysts as originating in other countries. The hundreds arrested and detained were reported as

“disappeared”. The Cuban news did not cover up these accusations but aired them and sought to expose them as lies during dedicated television programs.

### **Friday 16 July**

US Senator Marsha Blackburn (Republican-Tennessee), tweeted: “Over 1.3 million Cubans have been able to access the internet today thanks to @PsiphonInc, an open-source tool supported by the bipartisan Open Technology Fund my colleagues and I championed. We must stand with those opposing authoritarian regimes.”<sup>19</sup> According to Psiphon, the number of daily unique users in Cuba was negligible on 10 July, rising exponentially to 1.3 million by 15 July.<sup>20</sup>

That same day, a tweet by UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, called on the Cuban government to release detainees, used the image of a black woman holding a Cuban flag and shouting in the street. The woman featured, Betty Pairol Quesada, responded angrily on Twitter: “I strongly denounce the use and manipulation of my image as a symbol of the protests by delinquents and vandals in Cuba. We are continuity, long live the Revolution. #NoMoreBlockadeofCuba.”<sup>21</sup> Twitter swiftly blocked her account.<sup>22</sup>

That evening, Cuban TV presented a video widely circulated on social media apparently showing a Cuban police officer shooting a man at his home, with the camera pausing on a pool of blood on the floor. The presenter showed alternative footage of the man walking calmly to the police car in handcuffs following his arrest and of him being interviewed at his home, in good health, three days later.<sup>23</sup> Every day there were also special news programs about the protests and the arrests and detentions, including the legal process which police must follow.

At the end of the evening news, it was announced that there would be rally on the Malecón in the morning, in support of the government and the socialist Revolution. This was the first mass rally called amidst the strict epidemiological restrictions imposed 16 months earlier.<sup>24</sup> The rally would be restricted to under 200,000, the news announcer said.

### **Saturday 17 July**

Before dawn thousands of Cubans were already gathering at La Piragua on the Malecón. We joined the rally, interviewing diverse participants on camera and asking why they were there. The resounding response was to demand an end to the US blockade and US interference. It was a short event, addressed by Díaz-Canel, who denounced a false narrative, which blamed the violence of the previous Sunday on his call for revolutionaries to take to the streets. Cuban internet news outlets had been subject to “denial of service” attacks aimed to silence Cuba’s ability to counter the opposition narrative, he said.<sup>25</sup> Gerardo Hernández of the Cuban Five, now President of the Committees in Defense of the Cuban Revolution also spoke. Former President Raúl Castro was present, along with other ministers. Spirits were high and while the event was serious, it also ended jubilantly with music and Cubans dancing in the road.<sup>26</sup>

### **The following week/s...**

The Cuban government and state media continued to address the accusations of disappearances and other issues related to the protests. For example, a television discussion on 21 July, explained the legal framework under which detentions took place, including the obligation to inform detainees’ families within 24-hours. An Interior Ministry official, Victor Álvarez, said “These lists [of disappeared] are a fallacy of the Revolution's enemies... we have proved that many of these people

are not currently detained”. The Head of the Department of Penal Processes, José Luis Reyes, claimed that since 12 July, 63 people had requested information about a detained person or had made a complaint about a detention. Among this list of “supposedly disappeared people”, he added, “there is a group that has been released, some of them received fines and others have received a caution.”<sup>27</sup>

On 22 July, President Biden reneged on his electoral campaign promises to unwind Trump policy on Cuba, announcing that his administration would use the Magnitsky Act to impose new sanctions on Cuban individuals, starting with Álvaro López Miera, the head of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Cuban Ministry of the Interior’s Special National Brigade. He also announced a plan to roll out US-controlled internet access to Cubans, which would be outside of Cuban government control.<sup>28</sup>

The Cuban government and the CCP have categorized the protestors into four groups: “counter-revolutionaries” paid and operating under US regime change programs; criminals who took advantage of the situation to loot; people genuinely frustrated by daily hardships; and young people who feel disenfranchised.<sup>29</sup> It is the latter two groups that state institutions are now focusing their political work on. Díaz-Canel and Gerardo Hernández, with others, have visited poorer communities, including those where violent protests took place, dialoguing with residents. They aim to reinvigorate the social and political organizations at the neighborhood level.

Resurrecting a program of the Battle of Ideas of the early 2000s, on 26 July 2021, the Union of Young Communists launched new Youth Brigades of Social Work, “groups of prevention and social attention at the Popular Council level”. On 5 August they began to visit homes in the 302 poorer neighborhoods identified to find out about the problems those communities face.<sup>30</sup> Within five weeks of the protests, 3,400 university students, young teachers and other professionals had joined these brigades.<sup>31</sup> The CCP was also working to strengthen its institutional presence and influence at the level of the Popular Councils.

Meanwhile, the Facebook page for residents of San Antonio joined calls for a national mobilization to take place on November 20. The Cuban government announced its annual national defense military exercises for three days (November 18-20). In response the opposition brought forward their day of action to November 15. On October 12 Cuban authorities denied permission for the proposed marches, stating that some of the organizers who “have ties to subversive organizations or agencies financed by the United States government, have manifest intentions of promoting a change in the political system of Cuba”.<sup>32</sup> The battle lines are being drawn and more conflict is inevitable.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Instructions were: ‘El clamor va a ser lo siguiente: -Váyanse del gobierno, -Libertad para el pueblo, -Díaz-Canel sing..., -Somos más y no tenemos miedo, -Queremos ayuda.’ Carla Gloria Colomé, ‘11 de julio en San Antonio de los Baños: Lo que se ve/lo que no se ve’, 22 July 2021. <https://revistaelestornudo.com/san-antonio-de-los-banos-protestas-11-julio-cuba/>

<sup>2</sup> Colomé, *11 de julio en San Antonio*.

<sup>3</sup> ‘El artista y ex preso político Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara llamó a manifestarse contra la dictadura castrista: “Me voy al Malecón cueste lo que me cueste”’, *Infobae*, 11 July 2021. <https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2021/07/11/el-artista-y-ex-presos-politico-luis-manuel-otero-alcantara-llamo-a-manifestarse-contra-la-dictadura-castrista-me-voy-al-malecon-cueste-lo-que-me-cueste/>

- <sup>4</sup> CubaSi, ‘En Video: Detalles sobre el ataque al hospital territorial Julio Aristegui Villamil el 11 de julio’, 16 Julio 2021. <https://cubasi.cu/es/noticia/en-video-detalles-sobre-el-ataque-al-hospital-territorial-julio-aristegui-villamil-el-11-de>.
- <sup>5</sup> Prensa Alternativa - El Jota, ‘¡Poderosa ONG está implicada en las movilizaciones en Cuba!’ *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiiuzF6MazM>
- <sup>6</sup> Canal Caribe, ‘Presidente de Cuba recorrió San Antonio de los Baños’ 12 July 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qd6XkgIKg>
- <sup>7</sup> Radio Cubana, ‘Intervención íntegra del Presidente de #Cuba Miguel Díaz-Canel este 11 de Julio’, 12 July 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnGMSGSVnOk>
- <sup>8</sup> Canal Caribe, ‘¿Qué hay detrás de los actos violentos en Cuba el 11 de julio?’, 17 July 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdWWDbxwbj8>
- <sup>9</sup> CiberCuba, ‘EN DIRECTO: Miguel Díaz-Canel habla al pueblo de Cuba tras una jornada de protestas’, 12 July 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcge7dVTIDo>
- <sup>10</sup> Nota Informativa del Ministerio del Interior de Cuba, 14 Julio. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6LLivUYHB0>
- <sup>11</sup> Brody Fort, ‘Over 1 Million Cubans Evade Internet Curbs With U.S.-Backed Tech’, *Bloomberg*, 16 July 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-07-16/over-1-million-cubans-evade-internet-curbs-with-u-s-backed-tech>
- <sup>12</sup> ‘En vivo: Canciller cubano, Bruno Rodríguez, ofrece Conferencia de Prensa (+Video)’, *Granma*, 13 July 2021. [www.granma.cu/mundo/2021-07-13/en-vivo-canciller-cubano-bruno-rodriguez-ofrece-conferencia-de-prensa-13-07-2021-15-07-58](http://www.granma.cu/mundo/2021-07-13/en-vivo-canciller-cubano-bruno-rodriguez-ofrece-conferencia-de-prensa-13-07-2021-15-07-58)
- <sup>13</sup> Ed Agustin, ‘Why the internet in Cuba has become a US political hot potato’, 3 August 2021, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/03/why-the-internet-in-cuba-has-become-a-us-political-hot-potato>
- <sup>14</sup> Julián Macías Tovar, Twitter. <https://twitter.com/JulianMaciasT/status/1414681690434412548> and <https://twitter.com/JulianMaciasT/status/1414681695207440388>
- <sup>15</sup> Reuters Fact Check, ‘Fact Check-Photo shows 2018 Cuba May Day march, not 2021 protests’, 14 July 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-cuba-protest-idUSL1N2OQ2DI>. The article itself exposed misreporting in a Reuters tweet which labelled photos of Cubans holding a portrait of Fidel Castro as ‘anti-government demonstrations’.
- <sup>16</sup> Pascual Serrano provides many examples of false reporting and manipulative use of photos, ‘La democracia es desinformar sobre Cuba’, *El Diario*, 19 July 2021. [https://www.eldiario.es/opinion/zona-critica/democracia-desinformar-cuba\\_129\\_8149927.html](https://www.eldiario.es/opinion/zona-critica/democracia-desinformar-cuba_129_8149927.html)
- <sup>17</sup> Gustaf Kilander, ‘Miami mayor calls on Biden to consider airstrikes against Cuba’, *Independent*, 14 July 2021. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/cuba-protests-airstrikes-miami-mayor-b1884238.html>
- <sup>18</sup> Alan MacLeod, Twitter. <https://twitter.com/AlanRMacLeod/status/1416713677378629636>
- <sup>19</sup> Marsha Blackburn, Twitter. <https://twitter.com/MarshaBlackburn/status/1416059430748237824>
- <sup>20</sup> Psiphon Inc., Twitter. <https://twitter.com/psiphoninc/status/1416069807301185537>

<sup>21</sup> Betty Pairol, Twitter. <https://twitter.com/BettyPairol/status/1416157403184340992>

<sup>22</sup> Pairol's twitter account remained 'temporarily restricted' on 4 October 2021 when last checked. She recorded a similar message via Facebook, denouncing the media manipulation of her photo and demanding the US government end the US blockade. Betty Pairol, Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/betty.pairolquesada/videos/507947167155070>

<sup>23</sup> Cubadebate, 'Desmintiendo fake news y campaña mediática en redes sociales contra Cuba', 17 July. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz3ItstwX\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz3ItstwX_o). Cuban news had already discussed this video on Wednesday 15 July.

<sup>24</sup> From April to June 2021, mobilizations took place on the last Sunday of the month as part of the international 'caravanas' against the US blockade of Cuba, with people in cars, on motorbikes, bicycles, on foot or sitting outdoors with social distancing.

<sup>25</sup> Oscar Figueredo Reinaldo and Abel Padrón Padilla, 'Pueblo habanero toma La Piragua en defensa de la Revolución y el socialismo', 17 July 2021. [www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2021/07/17/pueblo-habanero-toma-la-piragua-en-defensa-de-la-revolucion/](http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2021/07/17/pueblo-habanero-toma-la-piragua-en-defensa-de-la-revolucion/)

<sup>26</sup> Helen Yaffe, Twitter. <https://twitter.com/HelenYaffe/status/1416394130465427458> and <https://twitter.com/HelenYaffe/status/1416394288011821060>

<sup>27</sup> CubaSi, 'EN VIDEO: ¿Desaparecidos en Cuba o fantasmas de las fake news?', 21 July 2021. <https://cubasi.cu/es/noticia/en-video-desaparecidos-en-cuba-o-fantasmas-de-las-fake-news>. On 4 August, 62 people had been tried in municipal courts following arrests related to 11 July; 53 of them for public disorder and the rest for resistance, contempt, and instigation to commit a crime and cause harm, which carry sentences from a 300 peso fine and one year in prison. One was acquitted and 45 were appealing. The cases of those accused of more violent or serious crimes were still under investigation. Oscar Figueredo Reinaldo, 'Así marchan las investigaciones penales tras los sucesos del 11 de julio en Cuba', 4 August 2021, CubaDebate. <http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2021/08/04/asi-marchan-las-investigaciones-penales-tras-los-sucesos-del-11-de-julio-en-cuba/>.

<sup>28</sup> Marc Caputo and Sabrina Rodríguez, 'Biden sanctions Cuban regime after crackdown on protesters', *Politico*, <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/07/22/biden-sanctions-cuba-500534>

<sup>29</sup> Andrea Rodríguez, 'Cuban government rallies backers following big protests', *AP News*, 17 July 2021. <https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-business-health-cuba-caribbean-9ed6c6dd50ddb764a482099e44cdc25c>

<sup>30</sup> 'Constituyen Brigadas Juveniles de Trabajo Social para laborar en 302 comunidades vulnerables', *CubaDebate*, 1 August 2021. <http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2021/08/01/constituyen-brigadas-juveniles-de-trabajo-social-para-laborar-en-302-comunidades-vulnerables/>

<sup>31</sup> For a full account of the Battle of Ideas see chapter 3, Helen Yaffe, *We Are Cuba! How a Revolutionary People Have Survived in a Post-Soviet World*, Yale University Press, 2020.

<sup>32</sup> See the reply by Alexis Acosta Silva, Intendente of the Administrative Council of la Habana Vieja on October 12, 2021, "Respuesta al documento presentado sobre la decisión de realizar una marcha con fines desestabilizadores"