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BY W. T. WHITNEY

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Report from Maine: End the US Blockade Against Cuba Now!



The two struggles have continued for decades, even centuries. Cubans fight to end slavery; gain independence from Spain and the United States; and, for 60 years, protect their socialist revolution. Ruling classes in the United States sought to annex Cuba, then to control Cuba's economy, and for those 60 years have clamped down on the audacity of Cubans who struggle for independence and socialism.

Justice-seeking peoples in the United States have joined in struggle to defend Cuban independence and/or Cuba's revolution. This report from Maine takes note of two rainy day rallies on July 25, each of 25 or so people and each one held in protest of the U.S. blockade of Cuba. One was in Bangor, the other in Brunswick.

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These protesters and other Maine people know that the blockade is purposed to overthrow Cuba's socialist government. The author of a 1960 State Department memo – born in Houlton, Maine – made that perfectly clear.

These Mainers were joining in solidarity with demonstrations carried out on July 25 throughout the United States, for example, in Washington, Seattle, San Francisco, Fresno, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Albuquerque, Dallas, Milwaukee, and Pittsburgh. In Washington, Cuban-Americans calling for *Puentes de Amor* (Bridges of Love) gathered with supporters in Lafayette Park to protest the blockade. They had walked from Miami to Washington.

Lots of Maine people know that Cuba is at another watershed moment. Many recall the onset in the early 1990s of Cuba's "Special Period," which was resulted from the fall of the Soviet Bloc. The powers in Washington at that time sought to finish off Cuba's revolution. The "Cuba Democracy Act" of 1992 was their big tool.

Similarly, the Biden presidency now takes advantage of three phenomena: economic and healthcare havoc wrought by the Covid 19 pandemic, the Trump administration's intensified blockade restrictions, and mounting shortages in Cuba of money and goods essential for human survival.

Now Biden inveighs against supposed autocracy in Cuba. His administration remains silent when elected officials viciously threaten Cuban leaders. He and they follow a script fitted out for anti-government demonstrations like the ones playing out in Cuba on July 11. These surely reflected U.S. financial support provided over decades for internal subversion in Cuba. Accompanying them was a massive social-media assault against Cuba's government orchestrated from abroad.

U.S. media have long cast a blind eye to the political movements in the United States mobilized on behalf of Cuban independence and Cuba's revolution. Those rallying in Maine on July 25 were testifying to their relevance now.

In 1992, at the beginning of Cuba's Special Period, veteran Maine activists traveled to the island. Sensing big troubles ahead for Cuba at the hands of the U.S. government, they formed the Let Cuba Live Committee of Maine. The new organization undertook to educate and activate fellow Mainers.

Let Cuba Live arranged for the Pastors for Peace leader Rev. Lucius Walker Jr, to speak before a large crowd in Monument Square, in Portland, Maine on July 21, 2001 – 20 years and four days prior to the protests reported here.

“In issue after issue, in area after area, Cuba lights the way,” Lucius Walker insisted; “Cuba has established the fact that it is the leader in the world community in the affirming of and guaranteeing the rights of the poor people of this world.”

That was not news for the ruling classes in the United States for whom revolutionary Cuba was a threat. Therefore, as pointed out by Lucius Walker: “if we really want to see the world continue to have hope and possibility for the creation of a new society, we must support Cuba.”

Let Cuba Live of Maine – see www.letcubelive.org – admits to gratification. The slogan that is the group’s name now resonates widely. It’s the title of an appeal to President Biden that, endorsed by 400 prominent activists, may be viewed in a full-page advertisement appearing in the July 23 New York Times. To see the open letter to Biden, go to www.LetCubaLive.com.

The twin rallies putting forth the demand of no more blockade broke new ground in Maine. They gained support from multiple statewide organizations that oppose U.S. imperialism and war-making and/or try to make good on socialist aspirations.

What follows are excerpts from remarks offered by some of the rally participants at talk-sessions that concluded the two affairs. A listing appears below of the organizations claiming commentators and many participants as members.

Here’s Barbara West: “We are not gathered today simply to demand a reduction in the criminal measures the US has taken against Cuba for 61 years. We are here to insist on respect for Cuba as a sovereign country ... We insist that land in Guantanamo occupied in defiance of the Cuban people be vacated. ... Our respect for Cuba as a sovereign nation, with its people fully able to chart their own path without any US interference, is really our agenda today.”

And Michael Mosely: “I do not believe that there is a difference between a Hispanic family in Maine and a Hispanic family in Cuba. Just like there is no difference between a Black family in Maine and a Black family in Africa. We are all under the same system fighting the same fight.”

And Daniel Carson: “In the over six decades that the United States has enforced such a cruel blockade, the Cuban government has reported that economic losses resulting directly from the blockade total \$144.4 billion dollars. These figures are those of 2020. Excluded is an additional \$5.4 billion in economic losses this year. When adjusted for dollar depreciation over the life of the blockade the number becomes \$1.098 trillion ... So when [U. S. leaders] proclaim Cuba to be a failed state or that the Cuban revolution has failed:

this is a bold-faced lie. The truth lies in those numbers. That's why we are here today to say, "End the blockade!"

And Bruce Gagnon: "The US has an MO (modus operandi), a way of repeating its regime change behavior as it desperately attempts to hang-on to its place as 'king of the hill'. But due to \$27 trillion in debt, more than 800 costly military bases around the world, and long-time disinvestment in our own nation, America's 'imperial project' is destined to collapse. US efforts to force regime change in Cuba – like in Nicaragua, Venezuela, Bolivia and other nations – are destined to fail."

And Ed Jurenas: "When the U.S. talks about democracy, it is hypocritical. It does not support the most basic democratic right to self-determination, but viciously opposes it. And in regard to the economic democracy championed by Cuba – free health care, free education, a right to housing, the just distribution of food – the U.S. is silent in its shame. Cuba ascribes to economic democracy, something the U.S. is incapable of practicing."

Most of the participants in the Maine rallies belonged to one or more of these organizations: the Let Cuba Live Committee of Maine, The Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, Maine Veterans for Peace, Maine Socialist Action, Maine Democratic Socialists of America, and the Maine Communist Party. The latter group had responsibility for organizing the rallies.

Lucius Walker has the last word (July 21, 2001): "We must name the powers. We must stand against the powers. And we must realize that in the course of doing so, we wrestle not just with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places. We cannot be deterred because they say evil things about us, because they revile us, because they put us in jail. We must continue to march, to work, to struggle, to be in solidarity no matter what obstacles they put in our way, because we are the future hope of the world! "

W.T. Whitney Jr. is a retired pediatrician and political journalist living in Maine.

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