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Orlando Zapata Tamayo (1967–2010)

**The Creation of the New Man and the Logic of
So-Called Popular Power**

Frank Mintz

September 18, 2010

When professional writers fill their pages with poison and garbage regarding the death of Orlando Zapata Tamayo (Enrique Ubieta Gomez's "Cuba: Para Quién la Muerte es Util" in *Rebelión* and kaosenlared and Angeles Diez's "El Caso Zapata, Nueva Agressión Mediática Contra Cuba" in *Rebelión*) in the best libelous style of real socialism, it is useful to remember a few things.

Orlando was born the same year El Che died (the regime was already six years into Marxism and Leninism), and therefore during his youth he was bombarded with tales of the life of Che, besides those of Lenin, Fidel, Camilo, and Karl Marx). He also didn't lack examples of socialist solidarity from comrades in the brother nations (Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, the Soviet Union).

If thirty years later Orlando was not a good defender of Cuban society, the cause surely lies as much in that society as in Orlando.

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Another fact: Orlando was a brick layer, a profession that up to now has not been prone to the discussions and sophisms of more than a few leftist intellectuals. Instead, he was interested in building a healthy society, another hint that something is rotten in the kingdom of the Castro brothers.

Indeed, when a regime takes power via a Central Committee and a “popular” police modeled on Lenin’s Cheka, it never relinquishes it, no matter how many strikes and demonstrations against it there might be.

In the Soviet concentration camps as far back as 1923 (during Lenin’s lifetime), hunger strikes by the followers of Tolstoy were a laughing matter for the “red” guards, who left the prisoners to die without any medical care (see the first volume of *The Gulag Archipelago*, based on prisoners’ testimony).

In reality—not according to the official press, utopian schemes or scholastic ruminations—the system of the Soviet dictatorship regime is capitalism. [...] Slavery on the job, [...] the impossibility of the working people to defend their interests when they are threatened by the directives of Power, the transformation of the unions into powerless parrots of the Party, the merciless punishment against those who dare protest, the monstrous growth of the repressive forces, the education given to the privileged and parasites whose only function is surveillance and control—such are the main characteristics of the Soviet system of state capitalism. Only the ignorant and the fanatics can see in the Soviet labor system the emancipation of the working class. What we have just said about workers applies equally well to the peasants [...] (*Bolshviskaya diktatura v svete anarjizma: desiat let bolshviskoy vlasti* [The Bolshevik Dictatorship as Seen by the Anarchists: Ten Years of Bolshevik Power], Paris 1928).

At the height of real socialism and the formation of the “new man” in the USSR, there existed the crime of “agitation or propaganda with the intent to undermine or weaken Soviet power [...] by means of slanderous statements that

denigrate the State and society” (article 70 of the Penal Code enacted during Khrushchev’s regime). The Cuban version—in contradiction to articles 530 and 540 of the Constitution concerning “freedom of speech and the press [...] the widest freedom of speech and opinion, based on the unrestricted right to initiative and criticism,” is article 144 of the Penal Code (December 1987) concerning contempt:

1. “Whoever threatens, slanders, defames, insults, injures or in any way offends, in speech or in writing, the dignity or decorum of an authority, public servant, their agents or auxiliaries, in the exercise of their functions or because of such functions, incurs a sanction of deprivation of liberty for a period of three months to a year or a fine of one hundred to three hundred quotas or both.”
2. If the deed described in the above paragraph is against the President of the Council of State, the President of the National Assembly of the Popular Power, the members of the Council of State or the Council of Ministers or the Delegates to the National Assembly of the Popular Power, the punishment is deprivation of liberty for a period of one to three years. This punishment is more severe than that for a similar crime against a Western European president or against the King of Spain.

Article 145 regarding “Denial of Aid and Disobedience” says in article 147: “The individual who disobeys the decisions of the authorities or public servants or the orders of their agents or auxiliaries issued in the exercise of their functions incurs a sanction of deprivation of liberty for a period of three months to a year or a fine of one hundred to three hundred quotas or both.” That means that any authority, either in the labor field or outside it, must be obeyed.

A person such as I who doesn’t understand the contradiction between the freedoms given in the Cuban Constitution and the

punishments of the Penal Code either does not know anything about dialectical materialism or concludes that we are dealing with dictatorial legislation.

Indeed, “Popular Power,” that is, a gang of self-proclaimed politicians, not elected by secret ballot, without control or revocation from below (as foreseen by a certain Engels in his introduction to Karl Marx’s *The Civil War in France*), not only shamelessly dominates the population but also demands that such domination be respected.

The sum of the various crimes invented by lunatics or swindlers: to the initial sentence of three years for “contempt of the Commander [Fidel Castro]” were added other sentences, in five judicial trials with no legal guarantees, that increased the sentence to a total of 36 years (*Clarín* February 24, 2010).

Orlando, the “vile delinquent” in the words of the above mentioned writers, was recognized by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience. I advise Orlando’s stupid critics to give up on the bricklayers right now. Cipriano Mera could not stand Franco or the sectarians of his own anarcho-syndicalist organization, and his major victory (as he put it) was his bricklayer’s trowel, before and after the Spanish Revolution. Sam Dolgoff wrote an anthology of Bakunin’s writings and *The Cuban Revolution, a Critical Perspective*, in 1976. Lastly, Julio Jorge López was “disappeared” during Argentina’s last military dictatorship and for a second time, after his testimony against the genocide Etchecolatz on September 18, 2006, with the direct complicity of the Buenos Aires provincial police and the indirect complicity of the presidents Kirchner, supposed defenders of human rights, but even more so of their personal interests, at the expense of the poorest members of society.

Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who benefited greatly from neo-liberalism thanks to their presidencies, can be compared with the Castro brothers, who also benefited greatly from power, thanks to their leadership positions.

Under them, millions of Orlandos are trampled, mocked, forgotten, but these millions do not stop thinking about their misery, and they prepare their revenge.