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Sanchez Guevara, Canek

Che's anarchist grandson, 1974–2015

Nick Heath

February 23, 2015

“My freedom is only valid if yours is too.”

Canek Sanchez Guevara.

Canek Sanchez Guevara was the eldest grandson of Ernesto Che Guevara. Hildita Guevara was his mother and his father was Alberto Sanchez, a Mexican leftist. He was born in Havana on the 22nd May 1974. Canek means Black Snake in Yucatec Maya.

As a child he lived with his parents in Milan and Barcelona, attending a Spanish-Catalan school in the latter city. He then lived in Mexico, returning to Cuba in 1986. He quickly became disgusted with the Castro regime and the way it persecuted writers, artists and others. He rejected the role that the regime were preparing for him as a high ranking military officer. He started dressing like a punk. He helped form a heavy metal band called Metalizer. One evening the secret police broke up a forbidden gig of the band, lobbing tear gas grenades into the crowd and subjecting him to a humiliating body search.

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He began to offer vocal criticisms of the regime which obliged him to leave Cuba at the age of 22 in 1996. He returned to Mexico where several members of his family lived.

He was a writer, musician, photographer and talented graphic designer. He moved towards an anarchist position and wrote in the Mexican weekly *Proceso* in October 2004 that: “The Cuban revolution has given birth to a bourgeoisie, to repressive apparatuses meant to defend from the people a bureaucracy very distant from that same people. But above all it has been anti-democratic because of the religious messianism of its leader”. He was disgusted by “the criminalisation of difference, the means of persecution of homosexuals, hippies, free thinkers, trade unionists and poets” and the installation of “a socialist bourgeoisie...falsely proletarian”.

He went on to say that: “All my criticisms of Fidel Castro start from his distancing from libertarian ideas, of his treason committed against the people of Cuba and the frightful system of vigilance established to preserve the State by crushing people”.

He was active in the Cuban Libertarian Movement in Exile for many years up to his death and wrote for Mexican literary reviews like *Letros Libres* and *Milenio Semanal*. Together with Jorge Masetti, a son of the Argentinean journalist of the same name who fought with Che in Argentina and died there, he wrote *Les héritiers du Che*, published in France in 2007, eyewitness accounts of their upbringing in Cuba and their developing disillusionment.

He died in Mexico City on 21st January 2015 after heart surgery. Commenting on changes in Cuba some time before his death Canek noted: “Sometimes we tend to judge reality from our desires, and that’s a problem. I would like to see changes in Cuba, but that is not happening. In the collective imagination of Cuba, change is associated with the death of Fidel Castro. The political system on the island has behaved like a monarchy, and Fidel has ensured a monitoring of the succession, and that delays any change. ”