

Imagine the Hands of Che Guevara

Imagine the Hands of Che Guevara
Perhaps folded, wrapped in brown paper, or tossed in a plastic bag

These are the severed hands of Ernesto "Che" Guevara
Conveyed through the Revolution's door,
Splayed out on poor Fidel's desk
 testament with a touch of guilt –
 the People's proof

I heard it on NPR, just a few days (now ten years) ago*
Authorities believe, with some certainty,
 that they have finally found his decomposed body
Deep in the mountainous Bolivian jungle,
 near the site of the execution, some thirty years ago
Unearthed in a common grave of remains,
 this nameless cadaver with –
No Hands

No deft surgeon's touch –
No warrior's resolute grip –
No hands thrust up in passion – signaling revolutionary action
 nor, as others say – for ruthless signatures assigning death
Cut-off hands – grasping the final punctuation.

Imagine that vast psalm of clarity just before the officer's bullet –
What would Che's hands wish to offer there – for us?
Another rifle?
 the severed balls of the Capitalist Bull?
 one last Marxist prayer for continuing on?
 or, would those fingers quiver, seeking only a last embrace?

Imagine Che's hands
 held out like that –
Wrap them in sweat won doctrine,
 or some well-worn worker's song
Imagine them as the Revolution's dismembered grasp
 labor's promise cleaved –
 as our own labors in imagination, still
Till for some diligence to compassion and equality

Beg of us some sage recourse
Unwrap this clotted silk,
secret blood encrusted contract
that has been crushed beneath the numbing ledger
of global market opportunity

Remember – these amputated gestures
Ask him – ask someone, or anyone – how?
How does one caress the beloved, or help a friend in need,
or, break bread for our family –
with no hands?

These exhumed limbs cradle our ‘new world order’
Mock stares, Che amnesia
stenciled red T-shirts –
graffiti on a wall –
along streets marked – *Free Trade Zone*

This body laid flat for autopsy has rotted in the back of our skull
Left its debt oozing across our brow
seeped forth from Bosnia, as in Belfast,
bleeds so painfully in Iraq, in Palestine
draped for shipping home – collect

Shouldn't these be urgent hands shaking at our starry craft
whose slumber drifts somewhere between proud Havana
and the dream that was America?
As we watch flickering Fidel stumble before the cameras,
like all revolutions that require uncommon courage and will,
Imagine –
Whose Hands could wake us, now
before this pathological narcosis completes?

- (from original notes 7/11/97 – NPR (National Public Radio) news broadcast 7-7-97)

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