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## Diluted Adoration and Concentrated Vitriol: The Development of the Cult of Che

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# Diluted Adoration and Concentrated Vitriol:

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The Development of the Cult of “Che”

Diluted Adoration and Concentrated Vitriol:  
The Development of the Cult of *Che*

Few images are as well-known as Alberto Korda's *Guerrillero Heróico*, the photographic portrait of the Argentine revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara. After his death in 1967, Che became a worldwide symbol, his name and his image invoked by any number of movements, in any number of places, in any number of years. Beginning with an exploration of the historical and ideological actualities of Guevara, derived primarily from Jon Lee Anderson's 1997 biography *Che: A Revolutionary Life* and Che's own writings, this paper attempts a semiotic analysis of Guevara's image, tracking its usage across (primarily American) political discourse. The arguments put forward by Luis Lopez and Trisha Ziff's 2008 documentary *Chevolution* and J.P. Spicer-Escalante's "From Korda's *Guerrillero Heróico* to Global Brand: Ernesto 'Che' Guevara" posit that the mass proliferation of the Che image resulted in a divorce from historical reality, a loss of context. Using evidence presented by Ziff and Lopez alongside Simon Prince's 2006 article "The Global Revolt of 1968 and Northern Ireland," as well as a wide variety of primary sources, this paper seeks to complicate, but not entirely abandon, the above notion of ideological dilution. The Che image began as a powerful political symbol, and while it has lost a large degree of its historical meaning in subsequent years, conservative ideological opponents of Che in American politics have actually re-concretized Guevara's myth, turning him into a weapon with which to attack the left.

To better analyze role of the myth that flowed on out of Che's death, however, one must first look to the root source, to the man himself and his ideology.<sup>1</sup> As a revolutionary, Ernesto Guevara is best known for his participation in the Cuban Revolution from 1956-1959, in which

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<sup>1</sup> When seeking biographical information, one risks a much smaller risk of bias than when analyzing ideology, so exhaustive works like Anderson's are extremely helpful. For an analysis of ideology, however, this paper bases most of its explanation on Che's own writing, due to his extremely controversial status.

*el Che* proved a quite apt military commander. Anderson's biography, with research drawn meticulously from fieldwork and Che's own writings, illuminates this period. Of Che's success, Anderson writes that the leader of the revolution, Fidel Castro, promoted Guevara to the rank of "comandante" in 1957, a special laudation considering that Castro himself, at that time, was "the only other *comandante*."<sup>2</sup> This promotion was not undeserved; during the final days of the war, Che's success in besieging the city of Santa Clara (his troops captured a major supply train) helped convince Fulgencio Batista (dictator of Cuba), in Anderson's words, that "it was time to go."<sup>3</sup> His life after the Cuban Revolution continued to be defined by guerrilla warfare, for he tried to foment armed struggle in the Congo and later in Bolivia, where he died.

Sandwiched between Che's military escapades, however, were a series of stints in economic and political positions. Before leaving for the Congo in 1965, Guevara maintained his prominence in the Castro regime, for as Marifeli Pérez-Stable writes in her 2012 book *The Cuban Revolution*, "Guevara became National Bank president."<sup>4</sup> Jorge G. Castañeda notes in his 1997 biography of Che, *Compañero*, that Guevara "was also entrusted with [...] the training of the new [Cuban] army, especially in ideological terms," as he had developed an educational knack throughout his time in Cuba.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, as the "first administrator of the Department of Industries," Che led the political charge towards agrarian reform and industrialization in Cuba.<sup>6</sup> These later roles and functions, while of a less dramatic nature than his bloodier activities, are of crucial import when considering Che's character. He was not a man of violence alone, but a policymaker as well, whatever his success in those endeavors might have been.

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<sup>2</sup> Jon Lee Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*, revised ed. (New York: Grove Press, originally published in 1997, revised in 2010), 256.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

<sup>4</sup> Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Causes, and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 76.

<sup>5</sup> Jorge G. Castañeda, *Compañero* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 151.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Whether as a policymaker or a man of violence, however, Che remained devoted to his ideology, another important component when considering his usage in contemporary politics. He did not spend his life on a vague crusade with hazy motivations, but rather engaged in a specific crusade with a clear purpose: Marxist revolution. As Anderson points out, however, the revolutionary struggle in Cuba did not begin as Marxist, and many of the rebels “were not only politically ignorant but viscerally anticommunist.”<sup>7</sup> The men under Che’s command, however, “were blank slates,” and his efforts to educate them – something he was well known for doing – “gradually evolved from Cuban history [...] to politics and Marxism.”<sup>8</sup> In his 1960 article “Notes for the Study of the Ideology of the Cuban Revolution,” a year after the war’s end, Che sardonically states that “when asked whether or not we [the Cuban revolutionaries] are Marxists, our position is the same as that of a physicist [...] when asked if he is a ‘Newtonian.’”<sup>9</sup> His Communism, then, was such a driving force that he extended it to all of his comrades, despite the fact that Fidel Castro himself would not openly embrace the “new social system [...] called socialism” until giving a speech in 1961, after the Bay of Pigs invasion.<sup>10</sup>

An important aspect of Guevara’s Marxist ideology was its proactive character. Che, as he himself writes of the archetypal armed fighter in *Guerrilla Warfare*, had “the intention of destroying an unjust order and therefore an intention [...] to replace the old with the new.”<sup>11</sup> The choice of the verb “destroy” was not accidental, for as Anderson writes, Che “identified war as the ideal circumstance in which to achieve a socialist consciousness.”<sup>12</sup> The tactical peculiarities

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<sup>7</sup> Anderson, 283.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>9</sup> Che Guevara, “Notes for the Study of the Ideology of the Cuban Revolution,” *Verde Olivo*, from the Ernesto Che Guevara Internet Archive, October 8, 1960, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/guevara/1960/10/08.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Fidel Castro, “May Day Celebration (1961): Cuba Is a Socialist Nation,” from the Castro Internet Archive, May 1, 1961, <https://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1961/05/01.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, written in 1960 (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1997), 72.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, 285.

of guerrilla warfare, in Guevara's own words, allowed "the people to free themselves [...] from a government that oppresses them."<sup>13</sup> If "guerrilla war [was] the chrysalis from which" Marxism would develop and find fulfillment, as Anderson writes, then Guevara felt the duty to extend that as far as he could, promoting and engaging in revolts across the globe.<sup>14</sup> This language must have been quite frightening to non-Marxist Americans, too, considering the special degree of acidity with which Guevara addressed the United States. Enraged by what he saw as their imperialist policies, in 1967 Che decried the United States as "the great enemy of mankind" and expressed a longing for "two, three or many Vietnams," hoping that repetition of the conflict's "everyday heroism and [...] repeated blows against imperialism" would raise global ire against the U.S.<sup>15</sup> Guevara's ideology, then, can be characterized as militant, Marxist, international, and deeply anti-United States.

The vessel for Che's postmortem transition, then, from armed radical and guerrilla fighter to global symbol, is a single photograph: *Guerrillero Heróico* by Alberto Korda. Lopez and Ziff's *Chevolution* is quite helpful here, as they extensively interviewed a swath of authorities on the subject of that photograph: Korda's daughter, Guevara biographers like Michael Casey and Anderson himself, and photography experts. According to *Chevolution*, Korda snapped the photo in 1960 while attempting to photograph Fidel Castro's eulogizing speech after the explosion of *La Coubre* (French cargo ship carrying munitions) in Havana harbor the prior day.<sup>16</sup> Anderson, in *Chevolution*, tries to explain part of the image's appeal: "He's long haired. He's beautiful. He's virile. He's angry."<sup>17</sup> J.P. Spicer-Escalante, in "From Korda's *Guerrillero Heróico* to

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<sup>13</sup> Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, written in 1960 (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1997), 50.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Che Guevara, "Message to the Tricontinental," April 16, 1967, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/guevara/1967/04/16.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Luis Lopez and Trisha Ziff, *Chevolution*, Documentary (Red Envelope Entertainment, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Global Brand: Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara,” agrees with the aesthetic explanation for the resonance of the piece: Che “defiantly staring” out of the photograph, a “man on a mission,” is certainly an affecting image.<sup>18</sup> Spicer-Escalante’s work, drawing on a lot of media philosophy (like the work of Jean Baudrillard) as well as historical research surrounding the Che image, provides a helpful theoretical analysis of *Guerrillero Heróico*.

Though Korda stood behind the camera when *Guerrillero Heróico* was taken, however, he was not the only artistic force behind the iconic image of the Argentine revolutionary. Spicer-Escalante narrates the history of the photo, describing how “Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, a wealthy Italian publisher and supporter of the Cuban Revolution [...] published a poster” of Korda’s photograph “and disseminated thousands of copies of it.”<sup>19</sup> Artist Jim Fitzpatrick’s later “appropriation of the photo” for a 1968 Pop Art exhibit “only increased the image’s and the icon’s cachet.”<sup>20</sup> Fitzpatrick says in *Chevolution* that he wanted his versions of *Guerrillero Heróico* “to breed like rabbits,” free from copyright due to Cuban legal complications, and breed they did. Pop Art was ready-made for mass production, and a market was about to open up.

This market exploded onto the scene in 1968, a year in which, according to Simon Prince in “The Global Revolt of 1968 and Northern Ireland,” a worldwide movement “against imperialism, capitalism, and bureaucracy” stormed onto the scene.<sup>21</sup> Prince leans heavily on Benedict Anderson’s notion of “imagined communities,” which emphasizes the use of language and rhetoric in creating acculturated groups, and draws upon a comparative analysis of a vast

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<sup>18</sup>J.P. Spicer-Escalante, ““From Korda’s *Guerrillero Heróico* to Global Brand: Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara,” published in *Latin American Icons: Fame Across Borders*, ed. Dianna C. Niebylski and Patrick O’Connor (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014), 52, 48.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Simon Prince, “The Global Revolt of 1968 and Northern Ireland,” *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (September 1, 2006): 851.

amount of primary sources – speeches, letters, pamphlets – to illustrate the extent of this imagined community. Prince argues that the activists of 1968 exchanged ideas, texts, and symbols in order to “conceive of themselves as belonging to the imagined community of global revolt.”<sup>22</sup> The question, then, centers around the involvement of the cult of Che in this community.

A viewing of *Chevolution* makes clear that *Guerrillero Heróico* was a major component of this rhetorical exchange. Ziff and Lopez include footage of 1968 protests from around the world – in Paris, Mexico, Berkely, Prague, Belfast, according to the title slides in the film – all of which contain activists carrying Che posters or signs.<sup>23</sup> According to Gerry Adams, interviewed in the film and the leader of the Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein during the Troubles in Northern Ireland, “everybody was exchanging bits and pieces” of dissident literature and art during the activist period of 1968, and Adams declares that these exchanges were “how [he] first came upon anything about Che Guevara.”<sup>24</sup> Even after the activism of 1968, international radical groups continued to utilize Che’s image; a mural in Belfast, photographed in 1998 by Bill Rolston, depicts Che in solidarity with Irish children, who are reading his literature; clearly, he remained a political symbol.<sup>25</sup>

Guevara, however, did not remain only a political symbol. By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, that image found its way out of the protests and into nearly every nook and cranny of popular culture; a quick look at [www.thechestore.com](http://www.thechestore.com) reveals an entire market centered around the sale of Guevara paraphernalia. In 2006, Target stores “jumped onto the Guevara bandwagon,” providing

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 867.

<sup>23</sup> *Chevolution*.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> “1998 photo of mural on Shiels Street in Belfast,” taken by Bill Rolston, found on his website <http://billrolston.weebly.com/1990s.html>.

customers with CD cases emblazoned with Che's image.<sup>26</sup> A 2012 ad campaign "featured the guerilla leader with a Mercedes-Benz logo emblazoned across his beret."<sup>27</sup> Tom Morello, frontman for the band Rage Against the Machine, openly voices support for Guevara in *Chevolution*, and in his 2003 song "Public Service Announcement" rapper Jay-Z declares that he's "like Che Guevara with bling on."<sup>28</sup> As an interviewee points out in *Chevolution*, the "conjunction between Che and the emerging world [...] placed him within the pantheon of the celebrity."<sup>29</sup>

Guevara's treatment by Hollywood in recent years only accentuated his "celebrity status," as major cinematic works continue to expand upon his legend. One major film, Walter Salles's *The Motorcycle Diaries*, narrates Ernesto Guevara's famous trek throughout Latin America as a youth. One could argue, perhaps, that Salles's film skirts Guevara's true character by centering on his pre-guerrilla days and thus avoiding larger debates surrounding the figure. Salles does not so much skirt Che's future, however, as he does precipitate it, for the film very much relies on implications of who this young Ernesto Guevara will become. His departure from the leper colony at the end of the film, sailing off into the fog with an adoring crowd waving fondly at him, seems to argue not that he is merely leaving, but that he is leaving *for* somewhere, about to embark upon a grander journey.<sup>30</sup> Guevara (played by Gael García Bernal) states at the close of the film, after all, "I'm not me anymore, at least not the same me I was;" his experiences

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<sup>26</sup> "Targeting Che," *Investor's Business Daily*, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://news.investors.com/121306-497643-targeting-che.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Greg Otto, "Mercedes-Benz Apologizes for Using Che Guevara Image," *US News & World Report*, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2012/01/13/mercedes-benz-apologizes-for-using-che-guevara-image>.

<sup>28</sup> Jay-Z, *Public Service Announcement*, The Black Album (Roc-A-Fella Records, 2003), <http://genius.com/Jay-z-public-service-announcement-lyrics>.

<sup>29</sup> *Chevolution*.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Salles, *The Motorcycle Diaries* (Focus Features, 2004).

on his journey, the poverty he witnesses, fundamentally changes him.<sup>31</sup> Salles, then, provides audiences with a sort of “origin story” for the man who would become “El Che,” adding a relatable prequel to the preexisting myth.

If Salles provides the myth a prequel, however, then Steven Soderbergh’s two-part epic *Che*, detailing Guevara’s life as a guerrilla in Cuba and later in Bolivia, offers up the legend in full. It is in the Soderbergh work that we see a full, albeit dramatized, picture of Guevara, watching him transform from a more-timid outsider to a full-blown tactician, as the film concludes with Che’s aforementioned victory in Santa Clara.<sup>32</sup> Soderbergh presents Che (played by Benicio Del Toro) as deeply sympathetic, with long shots of him distanced from his comrades as he writes in his diary, or struggling with his asthma, or giving medical assistance to Cuban villagers.<sup>33</sup> This sympathy culminates in the last moments of the second part, in which Che’s death is filmed from his own point of view; the audience sees what Guevara sees as he is shot, implying a degree of solidarity between the viewer and the subject.<sup>34</sup> These films – as well as *Chevolution* – provide an important viewpoint from which to study Guevara’s enduring legend, given their prominence in Western (especially American) culture. Presented in a medium familiar to many, created by artists with strong reputations, their existence serves to roll the Che image a few steps further, into the narrative schema of individuals who watch them.

Many have argued, however, that the Che image has rolled a few steps too far over the years, and that his icon has been diluted by mass proliferation. In *Chevolution*, Michael Casey points out that Korda’s cropping of the original photograph decimates the connection between visual representation and context, for while the image stands as an effective “artistic creation, a

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Steven Soderbergh, *Che: Part One*, (IFC Films, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Steven Soderbergh, *Che: Part Two*, (IFC Films, 2008).

portrait,” it ceases to correspond with the historical realities of Guevara as a figure.<sup>35</sup> Spicer-Escalante, too, argues that the global spread of the image’s popularity, and the ease with which it was reproduced, led to “the eventual transformation of Korda’s [photo] into a vacuous stereotype.”<sup>36</sup> According to Spicer-Escalante, most people’s “understanding of Guevara as [...] a revolutionary ideologue becomes unimportant, even irrelevant, to their ability to identify with a commodified Che.”<sup>37</sup>

While these arguments, in most respects, are valid, they neglect two major concerns. Firstly, the radical protesters of 1968 were very much aware of – and sympathetic toward – the militant, Marxist, international, and deeply anti-United States timbre of Che’s ideology. Guevara had barely been dead a year during the “global revolt,” and their efforts very frequently consisted of actual revolution – the presence of Gerry Adams, a leader of Northern Irish nationalists, in *Chevolution* is evidence enough for that. Admittedly, the cult of Che has been less rhetorically consistent in contemporary political discourse than it was in 1968. In that respect, the image of Guevara now represents a watered-down version of the original legend, diluted over the years by sheer exposure. As Anderson writes, “whatever the image [of Che] signifies” in contemporary culture, it “has little to do with Che himself.”<sup>38</sup>

Anderson’s comment, however, only applies to Che’s supporters, not his detractors, for the second element neglected by Lopez, Ziff, and Spicer-Escalante are the conservative voices. Opponents of Che, angered and indignant over the abstraction of a man they see as historically wicked into a vague symbol for dissidence and change, have tried to anchor his image back to their perspective of historical reality. In 2012, for example, the founder of the Human Rights

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<sup>35</sup> *Chevolution*.

<sup>36</sup> Spicer-Escalante, 55.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, introduction to revised edition of *Che: A Revolutionary Life*, xiv-xv.

Association, Thor Halvorssen, protested the sale of Che merchandise by Urban Outfitters, writing to them to raise awareness about “Guevara's actual record” as “a brutal tyrant who suppressed individual freedom in Cuba and murdered those who challenged his worldview.”<sup>39</sup>

Halvorssen, a human rights activist, is by no means the only one to whom the Che legend “represents tyranny and repression.”<sup>40</sup> In a 2005 *USA Today* editorial, Ryan Clancy compared Ernesto Guevara to Osama Bin Laden, marveling at the “backdrop of ignorance” he sees supporting the mainstream popularity of radical leftist icons like Che and sarcastically wondering, “Who knew that bread lines were the new black?”<sup>41</sup> Writing about the popularity of *The Motorcycle Diaries*, Paul Berman states that “the cult of Ernesto Che Guevara is an episode in the moral callousness of our time,” reacting strongly against the “Christological cult of martyrdom” that has arisen around Che.<sup>42</sup> Clearly, those who despise Che have not lost touch with his ideology – his Marxism and his violent actions are very present in their discourse. While these sources are in no way academic or historical, their purpose in this semiotic analysis is not to illustrate Che’s true character, but rather the individual author’s perception of that character. These primary sources serve to illustrate the venom with which some think of Che, seeing him as immoral scum rather than a savior. The debate around Che’s ethical validity, however, is not the subject of this paper; that the debate itself exists, however, is quite relevant.

One can link the existence of this debate, this strange tension between diluted adoration and concentrated vitriol that characterizes contemporary representations of Guevara, to another

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<sup>39</sup> Thor Halvorssen, “An Open Letter to Urban Outfitters Regarding Their Che Guevara Merchandise,” *Huffington Post*, September 19, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/thor-halvorssen/an-open-letter-to-urban-o\\_b\\_1895353.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/thor-halvorssen/an-open-letter-to-urban-o_b_1895353.html).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ryan Clancy, “Che Guevara Should Be Scorned — Not Worn,” *USA Today*, October 30, 2005, [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/2005-10-30-guevara-edit\\_x.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/2005-10-30-guevara-edit_x.htm).

<sup>42</sup> Paul Berman, “The Cult of Che,” *Slate*, September 24, 2004, [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2004/09/the\\_cult\\_of\\_che.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2004/09/the_cult_of_che.html).

Guevara-centric phenomenon in the United States. Given the political origins of Che's popularity in 1968, one might assume that the American left continues to use him as a motivating force. In mainstream politics, however, one rarely, if ever, sees Democrats tie themselves to Guevara. President Barack Obama certainly ran on a message of "Change" in 2008, but in no way was that change militant, Marxist, international, or deeply anti-United States. Right-wing political commentators – not just general opponents of Che but members of the Republican Party engaged in Republican-centric discourse – invoke Guevara constantly, albeit adopting the tenor of Halvorssen, Clancy, and Berman rather than Salles and Soderbergh.

Glenn Beck, the Fox News commentator, engages in rhetorical assaults on Che with a special frequency, though his 2010 television special *The Revolutionary Holocaust – Live Free...Or Die* sums up his views on Guevara. In the special, Beck interviews Nick Gillespie, who states that the "cult of Che [...] effectively thrives in the absence of any historical understanding."<sup>43</sup> Supporters of Che, Gillespie argues, ignore the fact that he "personally oversaw the execution of anywhere from 175 to several hundred people," and in the same documentary, Cuban-American author Humberto Fontova even goes so far as to refer to Che as "clinically a sadist."<sup>44</sup> They cite other objectionable elements of Che's personage, accusing him of racial prejudice among other things, all of which leads Beck to pose the rhetorical question, "What's wrong with wearing the t-shirt of a warmongering, bloodthirsty racist?"<sup>45</sup>

None of this, in and of itself, is terribly revolutionary evidence when considering the way that conservatives approach Guevara. Beck, however, does not stop at criticizing Guevara. In *The Revolutionary Holocaust*, Beck points out, with a mocking tone, that "nowhere is Che

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<sup>43</sup> Glenn Beck, *The Revolutionary Holocaust- Live Free.. or Die (Part 4/5)*, 2010, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMPWIqHli00&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMPWIqHli00&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

seemingly loved more than in Hollywood, USA,” a comment that both refers, perhaps, to *The Motorcycle Diaries* and Soderbergh’s films as well as resonates with his general distaste for the media writ large.<sup>46</sup> In a clip uploaded in 2009, Beck gestures to a chalkboard plastered with the faces of leftist figures, one of which is Che, and says “these are all people who are into social justice, environmental justice, redistribution of wealth.”<sup>47</sup> American politicians, Beck argues, support the same political platforms, and as such must be ideologically associated with them, stating dramatically, “the enemy is not only in the gates, they are inside the house!”<sup>48</sup>

Beck’s rhetoric here is indicative of a much broader trend within the American right: the use of the cult of Che as a weapon to both rile up conservative support and to indict the left. Upon the installation of liberal Rachel Maddow as an MSNBC anchor, for example, Margot Adler of NPR reports that “John Gibson of Fox News remarked that the only way MSNBC could get any more left would be by exhuming Che Guevara from his grave.”<sup>49</sup> In 2012, Luke Johnson of the Huffington Post reported that Mitt Romney’s presidential campaign was running a “Spanish-language ad in the Miami area that ties President Barack Obama to figures who are anathema to many in the region’s Cuban population -- Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez and *Che Guevara*” (emphasis mine).<sup>50</sup> Beck draws connections between Guevara and President Obama as

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Glenn Beck, “*The Left Loves Che, Castro and MAO*,” uploaded by cnin242 on October 16, 2009, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxZ8vGsDzfw&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxZ8vGsDzfw&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Margot Adler, “Rachel Maddow: Sassy, Acerbic And — Yes — Liberal,” 23 October 2008, *NPR.org*, accessed November 10, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=96039037>.

<sup>50</sup> Luke Johnson, “Obama Tied To Hugo Chavez, Fidel Castro In Mitt Romney Spanish-Language Ad,” *Huffington Post*, November 1, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/01/obama-hugo-chavez-mitt-romney\\_n\\_2055927.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/01/obama-hugo-chavez-mitt-romney_n_2055927.html).

well, for in a 2009 television episode he claimed that “the roots of the tree of radicalism and revolution” grow up from the Argentinian and lead to the president.<sup>51</sup>

One of the great ironies of the cult of Che, in conclusion, is that his opponents are the ones who most aggressively attempt to reframe Guevara’s prominence in popular culture around his historical actualities. While the Korda image, spread by the likes of Fitzpatrick and Feltrinelli, met with huge success within the mass movements of 1968, the image has lost a great deal of its contextual meaning. Conservative reactions re-emphasize Guevara’s history and ideology, albeit in a negative way, and rightwing American politicians have even adopted the cult of Che as their own rhetorical tool with which to construct their own platform. The reason for the ease with which the right has co-opted Che’s image deserves further analysis; potentially, Che’s abstraction into a myth left his actual message too weak to fend off a takeover. Nevertheless, Che and his image have certainly survived after his death; just not, perhaps, in a way that he would want.

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<sup>51</sup> Glenn Beck, *Tree of Revolution, Part 1*, 19 September 2009, uploaded by SomePoliticalClips, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rPqiLLHcxQ&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rPqiLLHcxQ&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

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