The Sales Pitch

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The man in the three-piece suit
sits at the head of the table,
genial, handsome, full of himself.
His politician's smile gapes open
as he mouths the party line.
"It has been a long and terrible battle,"
he says, "but now the red dragon
has been defeated and we can leave
the past behind and move
towards a glorious future."

An uncomfortable stirring,
a slight cough, the shuffled feet
of the visitors answer him.
Their questions pop softly,
like fizzled firecrackers,
into the charged air.

"What death squads?" he responds.
"Have you seen any death squads?
They are merely the inventions
of the foreign journalists.
Have you been to the coast yet?
You should visit our beaches.
It is lovely there.
The ocean curls up softly on the sand,
the palm fronds dance in the breeze,
and the resorts are very economical.
You should go home and tell your people
about our beautiful country.
They could spend their holidays here.
We need them to come and visit."

His words buzz around the room
like a lazy fly. Their drone
attempts to block out the cries
of the mothers of the disappeared,
the sounds of the beggar boys
with glue on their breath
asking for a dollar, the roar of trucks
full of soldiers, armed and aimed,
patrolling the city streets.

"Why speak of what is past?" he asks.
"Tell your people about our climate,
our beaches, our markets, our hotels,
things Americans like.
Tell them to come and visit
our beautiful country."