

A HOT DECEMBER DAY.

This was the day of the call
of the mother drum:
It's rolling echoes, it's deepening rumble
in the valleys, in the hills,
an ominous call.

A hot December day
with eagles flying high:
wisps of dust from bare feet
on a gravel road.
The distant mirage..... a dry parch in the throat,
the rustle of the grass
along the village path,
bespeaking the urgency of the call
of the mother drum.

Salty beads of sweat
on a wrinkled forehead,
tired eyes, set deep in the sockets,
witness to long harrowing years
of suffering in silence.

It was a call
to the mothers in the land:
palms clasped tight behind each head,
dressed in rags, dressed in black.
The racking wail for the lost, and the fallen
against the merry laughter of those in triumph:
The wicked twinkle in the eyes of the man,
against the heartbreaking emptiness in the homes:
The hopeless look of the orphanchild...
and it's widowed mother,
all too well, the famous hallmark
in the state passtime;
A dark ritual of bloody cataclysms,
by maniacs come to roost
in the cockpit of the statecraft:
The muzzles of their hungry guns
stuck firm at the necks of it's citizenry..
meekly chocking in the acrid pungency
of imported gunpowder.

It was a call to the wombs that laboured
to come to hear the pronouncement
that would finally tell them
their sons were really gone... gone for good.
And that their hairs,
should now be shaved:

And that fresh strips from the bark of the “ogali” tree
tied at the temple, around the heads,
would further confirm
It’s all over.

And as they came.
And with their eyes they saw the man:
It was a strange man,
Herald of State... with a list:
a long long list, for indeed,
many had gone, much too long.
And with their ears they heard the man,
messenger of death, come to boast it’s take:
Telling them they were jiggers
their children were lice
their dead were parasites
their ancestors were anti-people
their unborn....anti-revolutionaries.

And as they heard the curse of death fall
on all they had brought into the world,
even those still to come,
darts of pain tore at their hearts,
tremors of agony
rocked their frail bodies,
vengeance pulsed in their veins,
but there was none left to sound the war cry
on that hot December day,

Catherine Alum Odora, 5th March 1988, in Stockholm, Sweden