

**Carlos Drummond de Andrade, 1945**

## **LETTER TO STALINGRAD**

Stalingrad...

After Madrid and London, there are still great cities.  
The world hasn't ended, for amidst the ruins  
other men appear, the faces darkened by dust and gun powder  
and the wild breath of freedom  
opens their chests, Stalingrad,  
their chests that burst and fall  
while others, avengers, rise.  
The poetry escaped from the books, they are now in newspapers.  
The telegrams from Moscow repeat Homer.  
But Homer is old. The telegrams sing a new world  
which we, in the darkness, ignored.

We found it in you, destroyed city,  
in the peace of your dead but not conformed streets.  
In your breath, heavier than the explosion of bombs,  
in your cold wish to resist.  
To know you resist.  
That while we sleep, eat and work, you resist.  
That when we open the morning paper your name (in hidden  
gold) will be firm on the headlines.  
At cost of thousands of men, tanks and planes, but was worth it.  
To know that you wake, Stalingrad,  
upon our heads, our preventions and our confusing  
and distant thoughts  
give an immense comfort to a desperate soul  
and doubtful heart.  
Stalingrad, miserable pile of ruin, yet radiant!  
The beautiful cities of the world stare at you in surprise and  
silence.  
Weak, in front of your dreadful power;  
greedy, in your splendour of rescued marbles and rivers not  
profaned,  
the poor and careful cities, once glorious, defeated  
without fight,  
learn with you the movement of fire.  
Also they can wait. Stalingrad, so many hopes!  
What flowers, crystals and songs your name pour over us!  
What happiness blooms of your houses!  
In one of them, only a stair full of corpses remains;  
in others the gas pipe, the faucet, a child's bath.

There are no books to read, nor theatres open  
not work in the factories,  
everyone died, mutilated, the last defended black  
pieces of wall,  
but the life in you is stunning and hops like insects in the sun,  
o my crazy Stalingrad!  
The long distance I seek, smell the bloody  
ruins,  
touch the dismembered forms of your body,  
walk alone in your streets where there are loose hands  
and broken watches,  
I feel you like a human creature, and what are you, Stalingrad,  
but that?

A creature that will not die, that will fight  
against the sky, the water, the metal; the creature fights,  
against millions of arms and engines, the creature fights,  
against the cold, the hunger, the night, against the death  
the creature fights  
and wins.

The cities may win, Stalingrad!

I think of the victory of the cities, that for now is only  
smoke rising from the Volga.

I think of the healing of the cities, that will love and defend themselves  
against everything.

On the ashy soil where cadavers decay  
the great City of tomorrow will restore its Order.

*Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902 – 1987) was a Brazilian poet, socialist and writer,*

1. What happened in the other cities, “Madrid and London”?
2. How did the Battle of Stalingrad redeem the life of other cities?
3. The Battle of Stalingrad was the most deadly in human history. Two million combatants died, along with 40,000 civilians, who perished of starvation during the siege of the city. It was the turning point of the war in European calculation. Americans see the war differently; what do they point to as its turning point?