
The struggle to avoid war

While the bombs still fall, the military tanks roll on, thousands of people die, the probable victors are already sharing out the loot. That is what this war was all about. Saddam and his mythical weapons of mass destruction were no more than a not very credible excuse. The whole world knew and still knows it. Both the oil and the lucrative contracts to reconstruct what they themselves destroyed are already in "good" hands.

In this case, the immaculate fluorescent green war, with fireworks launched by "intelligent weapons" and "friendly fire" presented by CNN was complemented by the war of pain, death and destroyed bodies shown by Al-Jazeera. Unlike the Gulf war --where we only saw the fireworks-- this time the world entire world watched in horror the spectacle of the real war.

However, whether the war is shown to us in a real or in a virtual way, it should be pointed out that in both cases we run the same risk: that of growing accustomed to it. The horror and indignation over a war that we all know is unjust and whose televised pictures enter our houses daily, is followed by the acceptance that there will be more wars. There is already talk of Iran, Syria, North Korea, as episodes that are as outrageous as inevitable of a permanent war. This is the greatest challenge: to avoid becoming accustomed to war and to continue fighting for peace.

For years now, it is being said that the next wars will be over water. It is considered inevitable. Books are written and pictures made on the issue. You only have to wait for water to get scarcer for the inevitable denouement to take place. However, it is as avoidable as was the war that so many human beings are now suffering.

Of course, if the world continues along the path it is following, water will become scarce. What is more, drinking water is already scarce in many parts of the world, both in the north and in the south because of the unsustainable production and consumption model imposed throughout the planet. As a consequence of this model, forests and wetlands --the regulators of water par excellence-- continue to disappear. Watercourses continue to be modified and obstructed by large hydroelectric dams. Industry contaminates water sources all over the planet. Commercial agriculture continues to poison the land with agrochemicals that end up by contaminating water. The enormous monoculture eucalyptus plantations pump out millions of litres of water from the soil and prevent the water table from being replenished. All these events are reflected in articles describing very real situations in this same bulletin.

However, it is important to note that none of this is inevitable. On the contrary, peoples are crying out and struggling all over the world to avoid it. Against their governments, against the large corporations, against international organizations. Some times, they succeed, some times, they are defeated. Nevertheless, they struggle to avoid it.

However, from the centres of power, war continues to be chosen. Against nature, against water and against the people. Instead of addressing the causes generating the loss of water resources, the large companies have chosen to appropriate water. The privatization process is rapidly advancing

and water --an essential resource for all living beings-- is gradually being taken over by the large corporations whose only objective is to make a profit. It is well known that the scarcer a resource is, the greater the profit for those who own it.

If we continue along this path, the consequences will of course be the usual ones: multinational water companies in one country will confront multinational water companies in another. Those of the stronger country will invade those of the weaker country. Not in their own countries of course, but in third party countries governed by some tyrant put into power by one of the two bands. Just as if water were oil.

It is time for common sense to prevail over madness. Humanity's resources should be precisely that: resources of and for humanity. So far, no dictionary has stated that the word "company" is a synonym of "humanity." Water is the source of all life and therefore access to water is a primordial human right. Its defence starts by protecting the ecosystems that ensure the water cycle --in particular forests and wetlands-- and ends by ensuring that each human being has drinking water available in accordance with his/her needs.

The war for water simply must not take place. Never. However, to ensure this, we now have to confront policies and actions leading to degradation and privatization of water in every corner of the planet and, at the same time, promote policies and actions leading to its conservation and equitable distribution. Citizens have the historic role of ensuring that their governments place the rights of their citizens before those of transnational companies, favouring life over death, peace over war. Each person has a role to fulfil, from defending a forest to opposing a dam, from promoting organic agriculture to opposing mining and oil exploitation, from advocating a legislation favouring conservation and equitable use of water to opposing monoculture tree plantations. It is possible. The war over water can be avoided. It is a task for us all.