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The Attack on the Earth

I just attended a meeting with a Colombian trade unionist who represented networks of farmers. It was organized by the Inter-University student association. What the unionist had to say was a piece of poetry which opened and freed the minds of those who, sitting in the school benches of a crowded lecture hall, sought the truth about the “seeds of discord”, or biotechnology. The same people who were seeking the truth about war and all other forms of siege that more and more often interrupt the fabric of life. This science brings death, said Luis, referring to the agricultural logic and technologies that continue to be imposed on developing

countries (if you will pardon the expression). But it also kills the spirit of man. Because we believe that the spirit lies outside of man. It is in the ground, in trees, in rivers. If we destroy all this, man will no longer have spirit. I gathered spirit just from hearing him say these things. The only things that I can understand and that I want to hear. He then talked about the resistance and the alternative form of organization for survival that his community and other Colombian farmers have set up so as not to lose the spirit, let alone their lives. He recounted how they had searched for and retrieved the many varieties of legumes and other edible plants that his people knew, by bringing back and reactivating old knowledge of growing and cooking. The experience of Luis's community is anything but an isolated case. For years, in different continents, farmers, and women in particular, have built alternative networks of cultivation. One example is La Via Campesina which is one of the most extensive and significant organisations present in various countries. But alternative networks were also built for the marketing of food. In order to get low-priced food that is "fresh and genuine", a mirage in many places in the West, networks within the United States itself have been built, connecting places like San Francisco and Detroit. But

alternative networks have also been built to craft and market products that meet other basic needs, from clothing to blankets to baskets to household goods. The day after this meeting I happened to go into a typical Third World shop near my house. It's a shop that also sells books. I was looking for things for my students. Some additional reading that would motivate them, not intimidate them, that would give them a glimpse of a suggestive, as well as useful, direction. Here the books are not among other oppressive mountains of paper as in bookstores. They are among charming baskets, drapes, coffee and food. I was immediately attracted by another text of Rigoberta Menchù, "Rigoberta, the Maya and the World". I opened it: "I said that I had withheld some secrets ... it's a decision that I maintain even now ...". Yeah, that's one thing that struck me long ago when I read her first book "My Name is Rigoberta Menchù" which I use in my classes at university. In the things I've written over the years, I have stressed the importance of those secrets and that they should be kept. They, too, help to believe less in the inevitability of capital and its science. That there is also something it does not know.

For some time now, I seem to be climbing trees, in some ways in a surreal life, but in others, a very real one because

the trees have deep and hidden roots. Without those roots there is only this deafening din of war and dark tales. My appeal to the earth and desire to turn back, I am told, is a utopia. But many have the same desire and are clearly in movement. Many varieties of seeds have been found, along with the possibility of life by restoring ancient agricultural systems, improving them with knowledge that has evolved without clamour. The other widely publicized solutions to the problem of life have proved to be false solutions that only led to hunger and misery for much of the planet. Multitudes are on their way and already at work to re-ruralize and re-poeticize the world. They march, work and throw poetic words against the juggernaut of war. Because more and more wars take away land, burnt, polluted, ravaged by weapons and long-lasting toxic substances. More and more bodies are burned, mutilated, maimed. Land will no longer be able to generate, or will generate monsters, arms that will no longer be able to farm. This is the last battle, this is where you win or lose. Everybody depending only on money, having some or dying along with the multitudes who are dying now, having enough to buy food, which in any case is only industrial food, and lose the spirit.

Roots, deep roots to eradicate dark tales and macabre

dreams. Bombs and wooden legs fall from the skies of Kandahar. Mutilated and starving humanity. Sheep, goats, jars of milk, the real wealth lost. Meadows, hay and oxen in Kosovo. Sacred cows of India, dung that warms and fertilizes, rice paddies, fields, woods and forests, rivulets of water, rivers of life. Animals of Africa, savannahs, jungles, deserts, plains of shining grass, fertile highlands and deltas full of fish. I see only this in any war that is going on. The systematic destruction of every subsistence economy, the systematic destruction of every community resource of life, above all the earth itself, so that the survival of all humanity will have to depend solely on money and will therefore be in total reliance and under blackmail. For this reason, humanity is rendered ever more overabundant, destined to lose the spirit and life.

But in the streets, in schools, in homes, factories, the countryside, the sea, students, women, workers, farmers, fishermen, indigenous peoples, this is what I said at the meeting: This time it is Mother Goddess calling. It is Mother Earth who is reassembling multiple subjects and different ethnicities of her children on the most powerful front of the struggle. For the true mother of all battles, the one for life.

Translated from Italian into English by ***Rafaella Capanna***

