

- International Solidarity -

The Tsunami's Lesson

by Wolfgang Fischer

at the beginning of this year and after the experience of the tsunami I have some questions and thoughts which I would like to share with you and I hope to provoke your comments.

What is to be learned?

Why on the one hand do we react with such a warm-hearted solidarity after the recent tsunami and why, on the other, do we hardly react to the devastating effects of war, world economic disorder and modern way of life?

What is it that keeps us from vigorously striving to overcome poverty and global injustice?

The world is overwhelmed by the sheer number of victims of the Asian tsunami. Nature struck on a Christmas holiday. Nature struck internationally and struck people of various religions and different mentalities. Victims are not just strangers of a foreign and far away world, they are our families and neighbours. 1000 missing people in Germany. An estimated number of 160,000 dead victims.

Feeling confronted by destructive cosmic forces, people often ask: why does God allow such distress and misery?

Contrary to daily coverage of warfare we find pictures of sorrow all over the world's media. Crying Westerners, mourning nationals from India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and other nations. The same pain everywhere. We realize: Humanity feels identical pain and sorrow everywhere in the world. The pain related to the loss of dear ones reveals that national, ethnic or religious differences do not really exist at all.

Broad solidarity arises and much help is being offered. Be it money, human or technical resources. International help in money totals 4 billion dollars.

All the same, we have to bear in mind that *«the US government has so far pledged \$350m to the victims of the tsunami, and the UK government £50m (\$96m). The US has spent \$148 billion on the Iraq war and the UK £6bn (\$11.5bn). The war has been running for 656 days. This means that the money pledged for the tsunami disaster by the United States is the equivalent of one and a half day's spending in Iraq. The money the UK has given equates to five and a half days of our involvement in the war.»* Quoted from George Monbiot, *The Victims Of The Tsunami Pay The Price Of War On Iraq* (1).

And George Monbiot concludes: ***«If our leaders were as generous in helping people as they are in killing them, no one would ever go hungry.»***

An estimated number of 160,000 tsunami victims has created a giant wave of solidarity. The victims have even triggered a fresh motivation towards the abolition of the debts of disadvantaged countries. The responsibilities of rich countries, justice and the human relationships of nations and religions are now topics in the media.

All the same, a ruthless capitalist mentality launched a cynical counter attack: *the abolition of debts would ruin the credibility of the poor countries* (2).

Isn't it high time we took advantage of our tsunami softened hearts and open our minds to create a phalanx of solidarity also in respect to the 150,000 children who starve regularly every 6 days due to the murderous effects of our world economic system?

In their case people neither blame God nor fate *because they very well know that poverty, hunger and starvation are all man made. Victims of the wheeling of political interests are just being banned from public perception as usual.*

Let us make use of the present impressions of distress and sorrow. Let us face global misery and let us be touched so we can realize our responsibility. Let us stop arguing about which religion is better than another or which ideology or which political programme. Let us stop dividing people into believers and non-believers, into equals and un-equals. Let us all together react in solidarity and vigorously support global movements for social and ecological justice.

Our job on earth is to create an existence which does no harm, which eases ourselves and our environment from the burden of cosmic challenges and catastrophes and which, at the same time respects natural laws which some people consider to be of divine origin. Serving each other is the best service we can imagine. Comforting and supporting each other is what a service to God is meant to be. *Let us leave behind traditionally rooted doubts concerning our abilities and capacities. We already know better.*

Let us start to believe in ourselves! Let us start to hope for the very best. Let us effectively change the social conditions on our planet. Let us produce and live a politics for life.

Let us shift our attention from where it is to the global common good.

The one and only relevance is improvement of the overall quality of all life.

Let us learn the tsunami's lesson.

We are of the same flesh, spirit and origin - and we know it.

If philosophy ever wants to be meaningful to global survival; if ideology honestly wants to serve the common good; if religion truthfully aims to link humanity with the source of life and the origin of everything; they finally and jointly need to start taking care of the social and political necessities of any very moment.

Footnotes:

- 1) <http://www.zmag.org/sustainers/content/2005-01/06monbiot.cfm>, January 06, 2005
- 2.) Marc Beise, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 8./9. 2005