

**The Karnataka State Farmers' Association of India** (see previous text) was one of the first social movements to target the World Trade Organization and corporate globalization. In India they dismantled a Cargill factory. They demanded India's withdrawal from the World Trade Organization – whose Agreement on Agriculture was shaped by Cargill – because opening up India's farm produce to competition from monopolistic global corporations and heavily subsidized US farm products was destroying their livelihoods. They vilified the WTO's global patent regime, written by Monsanto, which facilitated corporate patenting of traditional Indian food crops like basmati rice. But they wanted to go to the belly of the beast. And so in 1998 they conceived of an intercontinental caravan of protest across Europe. Now the Indian farmers could face the WTO and the agribusiness corporations down right on their doorsteps.

450 activists from Southern grassroots movements took part in the Intercontinental Caravan protest tour of Europe in the summer of 1999. Participants included not just 400 Indian farmers, but activists from the Movimento Sem Terra (Landless Movement of Brazil), and from Colombia, Mexico, Bangladesh, and other places. They came together with European activists to organize the caravan which culminated at the protests at the G8 summit in Köln, Germany on 18 June 1999 as part of a global day of action.

*"We do not want Western money, technologies or 'experts' to impose their development model on us. We refuse to be used as political tools to ask the elites for reforms that we never demanded. We only want to organize our strength and combine it with the strength of other movements in the North and the South in order to regain control over our lives. We are not working for a place on the global table of negotiations, nor for a bloody revolution; we are just working on the long-term process of construction of a different world, a world which will come about from the local to the global, from a shift in the values and everyday choices of millions of persons."* – KRRS, 18 June 1999.

## Life Is Not Business: the intercontinental caravan

by Katharine Ainger

"Brilliant idea," I'd thought when Nanjundaswamy, leader of the Karnataka State Farmers' Association (KRRS), first explained the vision of an Intercontinental Caravan at a gathering on globalization and resistance by Lake Geneva, the World Trade Organization headquarters glittering in the sun on the far shore. "It'll never happen."

Ten months later, and I'm at the airport to meet a hundred Indian peasants from the KRRS off their chartered Russian plane. I still can't believe they'll ever reach Europe, a feeling which persists until I round a corner, and there they are.

They walk in the white sterility of the airport with a banner proclaiming their arrival, past adverts for corporate bank accounts, global financial services and consumer items for business travellers. Their contingent fills an entire baggage-reclaiming belt. Then, with Indian flags flying on their airport trolleys, they pour into Fortress Europe under the startled gaze of immigration officials.

They seem to me a small but significant rent in the silent curtain that separates the planet into rich and poor.

The following morning, I wake beside dozens of sleeping bodies, my hair filled with straw. We have spent the night in the hayloft of an enormous, dilapidated thirteenth-century

monastery on the far eastern German border. As I descend the wobbly ladder, the mist lifts off the surrounding fields, and I try to take in the improbable view below me.

A rural Indian hamlet has been dropped wholesale into the German countryside. Hundreds of Indian farmers are wandering around in the chill of the early morning, many wrapped in the trademark green shawls (the “colour of growing things”) of the Karnataka farmers. A serene old man wearing *kurta pajamas* and plastic shoes seated in the centre of the courtyard takes a long, slow draw from a hookah pipe as large as himself, and still with its Aeroflot baggage-tag attached. He nods towards me graciously. In the far corner, steam rises from the vast vats of *chai* (tea) being brewed by local and international volunteers. In another corner a group of shivering Indians with fur hats are watching a kid with a shaved head and three dreadlocks sticking out the back of his head trace a route across a map of Europe. Women expertly wash themselves without removing their saris by the taps.

Grabbing a chewy piece of bread and some tea, I catch a glimpse of my friend Kolya and run over to him. “You did it!”

is all I can say, as we clutch each other somewhat hysterically. He, and several hundred other European activists have been working for ten months to do the impossible. Defying staggering odds, logic – and possibly common sense – they have brought hundreds of members of Southern social movements to Europe for a one-month protest tour that will traverse nine countries. This includes 400 peasant farmers from India and 50 movement representatives from other regions, including *Movimento Sem Terra* (Landless Movement) from Brazil, the indigenous Mapuche movement from Chile, the Process of Black Communities from Colombia, environmentalists from Pakistan, a women’s land rights movement from Bangladesh, human rights activists from Nepal, a member of the Mexican civil society support group for the Zapatistas, and many more.

This is the Intercontinental Caravan of Solidarity and Resistance, or ICC. It’s an unprecedented initiative to bring members of Southern social movements at the forefront of resisting globalization and capitalist exploitation, en masse, to protest for themselves at Northern centres of power. They will swarm at the headquarters of the World Trade

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Revolutionary Party (PRI) dynasty. Days later, the company fires the pro-union workers, and one month later the election is declared invalid by the National Conciliation and Arbitration Board.

>> **October 15** >> Zimbabwe’s impoverished farm workers, the largest single group of workers in the country, win a hefty wage increase as a result of their first organized national strike against the country’s

wealthy, predominantly white, commercial farmers. Farm workers, who walked out at the end of September, were demanding wage increases and additional leave days. During the strike, thousands of singing, chanting workers blocked highways, invaded farms, and chased union officials from a tea plantation after suggestions that the strikers return to work.

>> **October 15** >> Thousands of members of two

Zambian public workers unions, the Civil Servants Union of Zambia (CSUZ) and the National Union of Public Service Workers (NUPSW) start a three day strike, demanding implementation of a 1997 contract. Hospitals, courts, and all government offices come to a virtual standstill nationwide. On the second day, with thousands more joining the strike, the government declares the strike illegal, threatening unions with

Organization. They will scream “Biotechnology down, down!” at the headquarters of Cargill, the biggest seed corporation in the world. They will destroy GM rice with French farmers. They will surround the NATO buildings in Brussels. The tour will end on June 18 at the meeting of the G8 leaders in Köln, Germany with an enormous ‘laugh parade’, the spirit of which recalls the cry of the Zapatistas: “First world? Ha! Ha! Ha!” Together, they want to resist the globalization process that they call corporate colonialism.

For 30 days, 11 buses will altogether travel 56,000 miles, take part in 63 direct actions, 85 public meetings, visit 38 farms, and go to 30 parties. The ICC. It’s at least as full of genius and insanity as it sounds.

Comfortably ensconced on a bench nestling in the ruins of a giant tree stump beside the monastery, Vijay Jawandhia of the All India Farmers’ Union explains why they have come. “The farmers were told we’d benefit from joining the WTO, that we’d get better prices for our produce. But due to globalization, the prices paid for our food are going down and down while the cost of production for the same farmer is going up.”

He’s also sceptical about the costs of the ‘Green Revolution’, which brought intensive and corporate agriculture to India in the 1960s under the auspices of the World Bank, and American foundations and corporations. “Pests have become immune to the pesticides, and the fertilizer has depleted the soil so we have to add more to get the same level of production.” This becomes a desperate

cycle of debt and dependency as farmers borrow money to buy chemical inputs. Jawandhia tells me about the 1,200 farmers who have committed suicide in the state of Andhra Pradesh over the previous two years. They’d got seeds and pesticides on credit at crippling rates of interest from a toxic alliance of ruthless moneylenders who were also seed and pesticide agents of transnational corporations. Monsanto used its local seed agents in a massive push towards planting cotton in Andhra Pradesh. When the harvest failed, many indebted farmers committed suicide by swallowing their own pesticides.

The mist of the morning is burning off under midday heat, and a German peasant woman with headscarf grins toothlessly at us as she passes. I ask Jawandhia what his message to the G8 will be when they join the protests in Köln at the end of the tour.

“We want to say to the G8 leaders: ‘We do not want your charity, we do not want your loans.’ Those in the North have to understand our struggle and realize it is also part of their own. Everywhere the richer are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and the environment is being plundered. Whether in North or South, we face the same future. We see the European farmers also being affected by ‘free trade’ policies. Just as Europe exported its development model to the rest of the world, now it is our turn to bring an alternative development model to you.”

Later that day I am wandering through the welcoming ceremony, and wondering why most political speeches are identically boring no matter what country the speaker

comes from, when I meet a man with a kind face, patiently seated on the outskirts of the audience. Mr. Somalingiah looks like he is in his late sixties, with a sparse beard, sandals, pajamas, and a green shawl. At first he is diffident. "My English is not good. I am not an educated man," he says quietly. We sit together in silence for a while, contemplating our *chai*. I ask about his farm. He grows coconut and silk on five acres of land in the southern state of Karnataka. Then, all of a sudden he leans forward and asks me intensely: "Tell me. Have you read Bertrand Russell?"

"Er ... no," I say.

Quoting Russell, Gandhi, Einstein, and the Indian plant geneticist J. D. B. Bose, and drawing on an extensive knowledge of ecology and traditional farming methods, Mr. Somalingiah then startles me with a trenchant critique of Western materialism. He believes, he says, clutching his tea, in Gandhi's vision of self-government and self-sufficiency. "Only then", he explained, "can persons have self-respect. The self-sufficient personality is not dependent. I came here because I want to tell European people about this idea of self-sustaining

village life, to tell them of the importance of an economy that includes the ecology of living systems."

I am rather lost for words.

"America and Europe," he continues, "they are part of a materialistic mega-system. This system does not allow people to live an independent lifestyle. People have no liberty. Every youth thinks only of profit. But this is something inhuman. This mentality had developed based around a profit-oriented megasystem. It is impossible to reach mutual understandings under such a system."

Then this man, who never graduated from primary school, gave the most cogent summary I've heard of what this movement is for, and what it is against. "Globalization means we want to globalize human society, not business. Life," he said earnestly, settling the full force of his gaze onto me, "life is not business."

It takes the best part of the day to load the 11 buses headed for different destinations. The bus I am coordinating is the last to be loaded. I watch with mounting horror as the all of the enormous tins of rice are put onto other buses – and

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de-registration and individuals with jail sentences. The unions comply, and call on their workers to return to work the next day.

>> **November 10** >> A US coalition of labour, environmental, farm, and other groups block the passage of 'fast track' legislation which would have allowed the president to negotiate new trade agreements without Congressional approval. This defeat

is seen as the first major check to the growing power of trade regimes.

>> **November 11** >> A two day general strike in the Dominican Republic is declared 80-90 per cent effective in the capital and 100 per cent effective in much of the interior. Strikers' demands include a 40 per cent wage increase, lowered prices on basic goods and fuel, improved transport and electricity services, and

reincorporation of workers fired from the state-run electricity corporation. The president declares the strike illegal, as his government's efforts to neutralize the strike, which included preemptive arrests of hundreds of organizers and journalists, and the distribution of about \$4 million had so clearly failed.

>> **November 16** >> Over 250 unionists and activists from 20 countries participate in the

there is none left for us. We are in the middle of nowhere, going on a 12 hour journey heading to Amsterdam with no food. No one can help. I can't speak a word of German. The other buses pull away. "We'll fill you up with some jars of food from the Ukraine that the monastery has donated," some helpful soul offers. We set off with 14 crates filled with dusty jars of pickled rutabagas from the Chernobyl region that the monastery has thus far found no use for, and eight litres of rapidly turning milk in the belly of the bus.

My fellow bus coordinator is a lovely woman, an authentic free spirit, but even less practical a soul than I. When I confer with her about how to feed our 40 caravaners, she puts her head on one side, thinks for a moment, then smiles and pulls from the depths of her enormous yellow satchel a cabbage covered in mud, which she passes around the bus.

Meanwhile I am filled with the aching awareness that forcing as much food as physically possible on the guest is at the profound and unchangeable heart of the Indian psyche. And here I am with 40 Indians on a bus in the middle of nowhere, with a tonne of radioactive rutabagas in the boot. We stop at a Shell service station.

This is many of the caravaners' first taste of Western consumerism. Several finger plastic ornaments, socks, and key chains in admiration until I translate some of the prices into rupees. We buy some supplies and the Indians unhappily munch on damp sandwiches. Fortunately my fellow bus-coordinator pulls vast quantities of sweets she has expertly shoplifted from the petrol station out of her

voluminous coat pockets. We munch on them all the way into Amsterdam. She, however, is the only one who tries the Chernobyl rutabagas.

The caravan is a mixture of inspired genius and terrible folly, and over the coming weeks it becomes increasingly impossible to disentangle the two. It stretches European activists to the breaking point or beyond, yet leaves a network of groups within and between countries who have never worked together before. In India, too, the farmers movements post-caravan are far more focused on working together on national issues.

Many Europeans have embarked on this project understanding little or nothing about the context of struggle in India. Some show little imagination in understanding the reality of the caravaners, condemning as 'bourgeois' their wishes to spend time out sight-seeing.

And some of the Indian men have difficulty adjusting their assumptions too: few women from the South are on the caravan – it is difficult for Indian women to travel alone or leave their families to travel. Many European women bus coordinators report disrespect from some of the male participants, and in a few cases even harassment. And, as one caravan email list posting notes, "It was probably stunning at first for many middle-aged, male leaders from a highly patriarchal society to be organized and treated on an equal footing by very young people – often female, and dressing and acting in apparently outlandish and shocking ways to boot!"

While in Amsterdam, a several-hour-long battle with a tight-lipped civil servant lends me renewed respect for the

mindboggling achievement of those who won the battle to get the caravaners visas for Europe. We are still trying to get British visas for almost all of the 100 caravaners en route for London in two days time.

Fifteen farmers from the Punjabi farmer's union and 20 from the Gujarati union (Khedut Samaj) and two Nepalese human rights workers have got UK visas, but every single member of the KRRS has been turned down. They made their applications back in Madras, India. But the high commission there treated them "like dirt", throwing their forms away because they had written in blue ink, despite the fact that the letters of invitation gave financial guarantees and support by several British MPs. "They are still in the colonial mindset at the Madras High Commission," one green-scarved KRRS farmer tells me, sadly, when I tell him we have failed to get the visas. Clearly, the KRRS's reputation has gone before them.

It is the summer of 1999 and Britain is in the middle of a popular revolt against genetically modified (GM) food, to the irritation of the government which has made great investment in a GM future. Fields of farm-scale GM trials

are being felled, by day and by night, by armies of activists in white decontamination suits.

In response, the Life Science industries' PR machine is on the war-path. They're trying to convince the public that anti-GM activism is preventing the hungry in the global South from feeding themselves. In this context the entrance of 100 Indian peasant veterans of a Cremate Monsanto campaign into Britain this summer would be political dynamite – something to be avoided at all cost.

The day the 30 farmers from the Gujarat and the Punjab arrive in the UK, an article appears in the *Telegraph* about a new Nuffield Foundation report which concludes that Britain has a "moral imperative" to develop GM crops to feed the global South, accompanied by a picture of an appropriately emaciated Biafran.

As it happens, the Nuffield Foundation offices are round the corner from the shambolic London forum where the caravaners are speaking. Learning of the Nuffield report's conclusions, they are infuriated by the fact that no actual farmers from the global South have been consulted.

Several of the UK's most talented genetics activists,

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Western Hemispheric Conference Against Privatizations and NAFTA in San Francisco, US, to hear testimony from across the Americas of the effects of Mercosur, NAFTA, and rampant privatization. Strategizing occurs about how to fend off the MAI and the FTAA. A call for a common day of action at next April's FTAA meeting in Chile is developed from the conference.

>> **November 25** >> Canadian students protest against the annual APEC summit in Vancouver, BC, and are met with preemptive arrests and an unprecedented attack with pepper spray, leading to a national inquiry known as 'Peppergate'. Intelligence files later released show that police requested the arrests of, and specified criminal charges for, certain activists "with a view of eliminating some of the more high profile members" of

anti-APEC groups.

>> **November 28** >> MST members establish a protest camp in front of the state Rural Development Secretariat in Fortaleza, Brazil. Military police attack as the protest begins, injuring five peasants. The camp survives the attack, remaining in place for over two weeks until 1,000 military police agents surround the group of landless protesters, sealing off the area, and harassing



The caravan confronts agribusiness giant Cargill

without whom this leg of the trip would have been a disaster, get on the case. By the afternoon the farmers have spread out over the road, blocking London traffic. They carry home made banners: “No to the WTO;” “Food Control Eats You,” and a big one split in two which reads “Say no to GMO” and sometimes, when the banner carriers get mixed up, “To GMO say no.”

Reaching the Nuffield offices, the crowd blocks the entrance and the farmers at the front demand an audience with the director. Eventually he arrives, looking very unhappy. He’s not sure whether to call the police or be excessively polite to his uninvited foreign guests – so he does both. Several of us accompany the farmers into the building to record what is said.

Around the table sit the leaders of some of India’s largest farmers unions. Manjit Kadran, the Secretary General of the BKU, an imposing man with an enormous turban; Ajmeri Lakshowal, the President of the BKU union; Lal Shankar Upadhyaya of the Gujurati State Farmers’ Association; G. Singh Haribe, Mukhtian Rana, and Hasmukh Patel, all give eloquent testimony to Antony

Dumay, the director, who looks nervous, sweaty, and extremely uncomfortable, and Peter Murray, the assistant director, who looks like he hasn’t had this entertaining a day at work in years.

“We understand,” says Manjit Kadran imperiously, looking as frightening as a Sikh can, “that you have issued a report insisting that there is a moral imperative to develop genetically modified foods to feed the world.

“Perhaps you believe that India needs genetically engineered seeds, or there will be famine? I am from north west India. India has a surplus of food, and we have a problem of storage, not of shortage. What we need is facilities and political will for the distribution of this food. This surplus is largely due to the production of small-scale peasant farmers. Even without genetically engineered seeds, we have surplus. So you can imagine our astonishment to hear from your report that we need genetically engineered food to feed ourselves.”

The director makes demurring noises that he hadn’t actually written the report himself, and that full details of the report’s authors are available on their website, and that

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and attacking journalists.

>> **December** >> Support groups around the world protest at the news that 45 unarmed peasants have been massacred by paramilitaries in Acteal, Chiapas, in one of the worst incidents of repression during the Zapatista conflict.

>> **December 2** >> About 120 people from the Committee of Unemployed of Central Montreal carry

out a ‘Commando Bouffe’ food grab at a posh hotel in Montreal. They storm the exclusive buffet restaurant and reappropriate the food, taking it into the street to feed fellow homeless and unemployed people. Riot police are called and 108 of the commandos are arrested.

>> **December 3** >> In Brasilia, Brazil, a group of people from the MST seize the Ministry of Land

Policy and the national headquarters of the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform for four hours. The protestors issue a list of ten demands, including the immediate settlement of the landless families in encampments set up on expropriated lands, the expropriation of 20 more rural properties, and the provision of grants and seeds to those already living in the encampments. This action



they can't engage in debate then and there...

"This very bio-engineering," interrupts a white-haired man in a dhoti. "What about our ecological and cultural biodiversity? When you limit seed varieties to one or two? Now we have 100 varieties. If one fails, we have many others we can use if we have only one and it fails, all fails."

Luke Andersen, a British activist who has written a book on genetic engineering, adds: "And in any case, not a single GE seed has so far produced higher yields."

Hashmukh Patel says, "Seventy per cent of Indians rely on agriculture, and most of us are small farmers. We are really concerned with these developments. Our past experiences, for example with hybrid seeds, show they are useless after one or two or three crops, and require huge amounts of pesticides and fertilizers.

"Your report gets heard. But we don't have a voice that gets heard. This is why we came in a crowd. It is the only way to show our agony. No one hears us. We are frustrated. Kindly tell our agonies to your scientists, the decision makers, tell them our miseries. And we have been collecting the tribal knowledge of our indigenous farmers. Kindly convey that to the decision makers too."

Another explains, gently, "You see, this is not a question of intellectual debate to us, but a question of survival. This is life and death for us."

And then he adds, with a smile, "You paid a lot of expensive researchers and consultants for that report. But we have given you our good opinion for free."

And then we leave.

Outside, a police officer asks for our names. When we refuse to give them, he says, "Suit yourselves. We'll just take your pictures and get them on file."

The next day we are on a bus heading for Bishop's Stortford, where a field trial of Monsanto's genetically modified oil seed rape was pulled up by activists two weeks previously.

Anarchist Teapot, a group who serve food at actions, have set up a bender (wooden tent-like structure) and are cooking lunch. A tripod rises out of the field, fortifying us from eviction, and as an imposing line of Indian farmers comes over the horizon, their union banners fluttering in the wind, three activists get up a folk song on flute and fiddle to welcome them.

A few neighbours from nearby houses turn up to read the information signs about GM crops, and are fascinated by the sight of Indian farmers and British eco-warriors planting organic vegetables in the soil together. Everywhere you look something bizarre and wonderful is happening. A protest veteran shows an Indian housewife how you 'lock on'. The Indian farmers are shocked to learn that it is illegal to save or swap seeds that are not on the official seed list in the UK. One listens to the anti-GM feeling sweeping Britain and says, amazed, "We're overjoyed to see that European people are also opposing biotechnology!" Someone shins up the tripod, until the activist banner of red, green and black is joined by the green and white Punjabi farmers' union flag fluttering in the breeze.

This, for me, is the best afternoon of the entire caravan.

One man plays an Irish song and says, “These lyrics are about resistance against British colonialism.” Then a Punjabi named Jagdish Singh sings one in return, explaining it has exactly the same theme. Dave thumbs an obscure traditional English folk string instrument called a sitar and Jagdish improvises lyrics. It stops me in my tracks. It’s the oddest and one of the most beautiful musical combinations I’ve ever heard – delicate English folk sounds to haunting Indian vocals – and suddenly my eyes are filled with tears. Finally, Jagdish ends with a song he describes as “a promise to our guru that we will not run away from our fields of struggle.” The activists who’ve been living in this field for days, and been organizing tirelessly to raise British public awareness of GM crops for months and even years, look like they understand.

Accompanying us is the agricultural correspondent from *The Economist* magazine. As we leave for home, I ask her what she thinks of her first crop squat. “I’ve had more intelligent conversations here than I’ve had in six months of café-squatting in Kensington,” she says, looking surprised.

In France, the ICC’s passing launched a mini-revolution. In Montpellier they destroyed a greenhouse of GM rice with the radical French farmers, in particular Renée Reisel and José Bové of *Confédération Paysanne* (the radical French farmers’ union). They left a populace that was dry tinder for a popular rebellion against the WTO, GM foods, corporate power, and *malbouffe* (junk /industrial food). Two months later, Bové dismantled a McDonalds in protest and became an international media star.

This was the caravan, perhaps the most ambitious attempt yet to connect up different traditions of struggle, North and South. Sometimes they combined in the most beautiful and unexpected of ways, emblematic of this new kind of politics. Sometimes they collided in ways that were more like farce than solidarity, as 400 Indian farmers discovered when they joined up with a peace march outside the NATO headquarters in Brussels. When a contingent of naked hippies arrived, the distressed Indian farmers spent much of the next half an hour entreating them urgently, “Please! Please sirs! Put on your clothes!”

They stayed in Berlin squats, stood on anti-genetics

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is one of a series of similar, and mostly successful, MST protests in five states.

>> **December 9** >> The Bolivian Workers Central (COB) labour federation stages a national 24-hour strike and a march in La Paz to protest the *gasolinazo*, or governmental fuel price hikes. The march in the capital brings together nearly 8,000 teachers, *campesinos*, factory workers, miners, retirees, university

students, oil workers and even small-scale business people and artisans in a broad-based rejection of the government’s economic policies. The strike is widely honored in Cochabamba, site of a second mass demonstration, which also pays homage to Pablo Rocha, a miner who recently died of silicosis.

>> **December 10** >> Julia ‘Butterfly’ Hill climbs ‘Luna’, an ancient redwood in the Headwaters Forest,

California, US. She lives in the tree for over two years, protecting the trees surrounding her and helping to draw international attention to the destruction of the redwoods.

>> **December 11** >> More than 30,000 people, mainly auto workers, march in São Paulo, Brazil, to defend their jobs and to protest against the central government’s economic policies, including a rise in interest rates to 40

platforms in Pamplona. They were turned back at the Polish border, where the local farmers were rioting and sent a note of solidarity instead. In Geneva, they marched to the WTO building. “ICC zindabad! WTO murdabad!” they yelled. (Long live ICC, kill the WTO). Italian caravaner Maurizio Cucci describes, “The green scarves of the Karnataka farmers, together with the red flags of Brazilian *sem terra*, the turbans of the Punjabi farmers, the coloured hair of the European squatters, a tractor of Swiss farmers... thousands of voices rise in a multilingual speech of testimony against the threat the WTO poses to their lives.”

Once, back in Karnataka’s capital, Bangalore, the KRRS laughed all day outside the state government’s buildings. The next week the government collapsed. There is a mass arrest of caravaners at the culmination of the ICC when they converge on Köln, Germany for the G8 meeting on June 18. But all is not lost: in downtown Köln – a group of laugh-paraders spot the G8 leaders’ wives visiting an art gallery, and a spooky “Ha! Ha! Ha!” erupts from their lips. Despite the chaos and the contradiction, the caravan has the last laugh.

**UPDATE:** In 2002, Reisel and Bové served six months in jail for destroying the GM rice during the caravan. The judge made no mention of the 150 letters he had received from Indian farmers in 1999, proclaiming their own guilt for this piece of direct action, and insisting they be arrested and charged too.

**Katharine Ainger is one of the co-editors of this book**

## Together We Start A Struggle

excerpt from a speech given by Intercontinental Caravan participant Jorge, of Brazil’s *Movimento Sem Terra* (landless movement), during the protests in Köln, 18 June 1999

### **Compañeras y compañeros:**

We, of the Brazilian and Latin American delegation of the caravan, saw, heard and learned many things on European soil. Two big lessons in particular:

We saw beautiful cities, large buildings, luxurious cars. An architecture that reflected history and radiated wealth. We did not always understand what we heard. For it seemed that amidst all this beauty, people spoke of bad things. We heard little laughter, and saw little happiness.

We saw with astonishment that many seemed half-dead, imprisoned in their own bodies without a spark of life, addicted to television and radio – doped by the sound of the religious ritual of consumption, of cheap and expensive drugs. Doped with indifference and illusion.

Thus we saw humans, empty, in the midst of beautiful things, but – without humanity. That is how this continent, which we call ‘the cradle of Western civilization’, appears to us. Now it is a grave, a cave, a cemetery, a consequence of the human race.

But here we also learned another lesson.

We understood that there is resistance, which attacks this order between all these bad things – when houses are squatted, when war is denounced, when the persecution of