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Antti Rautiainen
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(Somewhat less positive account than the Finnish version)
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Here is finally story about inter-continental caravan in Finland. I have a longer one in Finnish, in case someone updates these stories to caravan-page.

Finland suffered also because visa-schedule was so late. Finnish consulate in New Delhi was flexible and able to write visas during one working day, but 6 days before beginning of the Finnish part, tuesday 18th of may it become clear that original planned visitors, mr. and ms. Jawandhia had no means to reach Finnish consulate until leaving India. We managed to change invitations, but two peasant activists ever showed up in the consulate for reasons that still remain unknown. It was very late anyway, so that's quite expectable. Fortunately plane company forgot to fine for cancelled ticket, and gave full compensation in contrary with their own guidelines.

We also tried to have someone to talk about European struggles, but because things were in chaos ICC office couldn't spend a lot

efforts to help us. Unfortunately we did not get information about this situation until thursday 20th of may, 4 days before beginning of the Finnish part.

I guess people have evaluated quite a lot what sucked with the visa process, and I have not a lot to say about that, but it still would have been nice to inform us what is realistic to except from ICC office to do. Of course we also made mistakes in the information exchange.

Still, we did not had to cancel the tour, I made few random phone calls and German FAU was able to arrange speaker for us in 48 hours (plane was booked to saturday). We also had an indian speaker, because Atal Behari Sharma from Indian Lokayan happened to be hanging around in activist exchange program in Finland. So we had 2 speakers, but both had a bit different approaches than caravan in general, and missing of the Indian peasants was a big backlash. Of course, financial situation was very much better, originally we had to keep all the fundraising made for European part in Finland because of collapsing of all the big financing sources, but after all we are able to give all the fundraising plus small part of our own budget to Europe.

But even bigger backlash was that so much effort was completely in vain. Many things in Finnish part had to be realised with much modest way than planned, no symbolically teared up gene potatoes, no direct action in gene flower greenhouses. If for some reason peasants managed to come due to our last hopeless efforts, there wouldn't have been very much interesting for them to see here. To be honest, bigger reason for this than sucking of the visa process was that caravan ever become very popular campaign in Finland, and too few people were working with it. Because of lacking of human resources and because 120% of energy during last couple of weeks went to arranging visitors, caravan become quite a lot to something we wanted to prevent with any price — a freak tour where activists tell to other activists what they already know, and a couple of other people participating the events have no any link to

reality of the visitors. Of course, I am just content that we couldn't get for example Finnish farmers participating, otherwise cancelling of Indians would have been a much bigger catastrophe.

However, tour visited in Turku, Hameenlinna, Jyvaskyla and Helsinki, audience of 7–20 in all the cities. In Turku there were speeches in the square, in Turku and Hameenlinna leafletting. In the weekend 29th-30th of may there was a festival in Helsinki, in which Caravan was visible. During the caravan there was an activist camp in Helsinki, which organised Critical Mass in tuesday 25th with some 30 participators (number of Critical Mass participators has been stagnating lately because they have been too often), in camp there were speeches about multinationals in traffic sector in tuesday 25th and WTO millenium round in wednesday 26th for example. On friday there was a banner action, it was planned to be from the top of Finnish chamber of Commerce but we realised that due to architechture of building no-one would have been able to see it, so we went to a level crossing.

Finnish events get some publicity in local papers, international events of caravan did not get any publicity at all, althought we made press releases. Finnish mainstream media really sucks. Caravan was in Finland 24th-31th of May.

I have quite mixed feelings about the Finnish caravan, with the few human resources we had we managed to do quite a lot after all, but maybe something more useful would have been done with the same efforts. But you seldom know beforehand which kind of activity builds movement and which not.

With you all in struggle to next millenium,
Antti Rautiainen