

Compiled Reports from the Fifth WTO Ministerial in Cancun, Mexico Sept 7-14, 2003

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I: Newlyweds Surprise in Cancun: Sept 7, 2003

Newlyweds get a surprise upon arrival for their honeymoons in Cancun:

Newlyweds on honeymoon who flew into Cancun on Sept 7 along with a handful of anti-WTO, pro-Fair Trade, Food Sovereignty Activists had something of a surprise when the buses cruised into the hotel zone. Federal Police with their vests, helmets, batons and military boots were moving about in lax formations, barricades lined the sides of the roads for about half a kilometer with the Convention Center in the middle. 'What the heck?' hung on the tongues of affectionate couples, suddenly awake in the shuttle, the hands of their mates for life interlocked. 'What is going on here?' To which a small group of activists informed them that the World Trade Organization was having its 5th Ministerial Meeting right here in Cancun with its hundreds of official delegates, and that tens of thousands of people from international civil society, like us, and campesinos and indigenous people from the Mexican countryside would be descending on this picturesque barrier island to protest as effectively as they could. A honeymoon to remember.

An article in La Reforma had a page about the protests, with the sensational image of an anti-globalization protester winding up to pitch a tear gas canister. Every part of the protesters' clothing was labeled: the painter's filter over the mouth and goggles (for tear gas protection), the jump suit (to cover the body), the heavy boots, the pouch with water, the leather gloves for handling hot tear gas bombs. The article estimated that there would be between 20 and 50,000 *globalphobics, alternate-worlders* coming to Cancun, with some NGOs as official delegates to the WTO meeting and many others not accredited. The image indicated it would be a violent confrontation between protesters and, presumably, the police (whose attire and equipment was not mentioned, even though the tear gas bombs would be theirs to fire).

At my Hotel on the Bay Side of the peninsula, near a Marina where luxury fishing launches were parked, I sat down to converse with a man in uniform that read 'Marina'. His military issue boots gave away that this was no local coast guard man but someone brought in by the Mexican Navy. We had a wonderful conversation, and after he warmed to me, he confessed that he had been brought in from Veracruz to reinforce the local Navy personnel. They were here: "to make sure that everyone would be protected." When I mentioned Greenpeace, his eyes lit up: "They have been detained in Veracruz." "Detained?" I asked. He saw where I was going with my tone so he said: "No, I think they had mechanical problems, and will leave Veracruz when they get them fixed." When I explained to him why as a person of faith I was here to struggle for the well-being of the impoverished and discriminated-against members of society, he really warmed to me. We ended our conversation by him stating that he was going to tell his friends about me and what I had said, that he now understood why people were so upset about the policies of the WTO. He asked me to write my name and phone # down on his newspaper, and said if he ever went to the U.S., he would call me. He gave me his name too.

This morning I went to the Continental Plaza Hotel and got my official WTO accreditation, with very mixed feelings. We had applied for this on the advice of the organizers of the Fair Trade Exposition, because at that time it was thought that their event would be held inside the barricades, and that therefore participants would have to have these badges to get through the security perimeter. Since then, it has become unclear whether their event would be accessible to all, or only to those staying in hotels on the peninsula, given the shifting security plans. In the newspaper, a map of Cancun center showed the entrance to the peninsula as being blocked off to protesters. In any case, this gives me access to the NGO center at the Hotel Sierra, where I now sit, in a room with more than 100 computers and printers, air conditioned and with fast

modems. No lack of money at the WTO.

The newlyweds and vacationers have their meals with mariachi bands playing for them, the sky is blue and the temperature is in the 90s, and this is one bizarre place, made more bizarre by this confluence of leisure behind barbed wire fences surrounding the hotels and a WTO process that may or may not destroy the livelihood of millions of people across the globe. I am off to the Campesino Forum which begins today, in Cancun Center at the House of Culture, where the Mexican Cancun people live. Thousands of campesinos will be camping in a large park nearby and I look forward to seeing many friends there.

Hasta la Vista

Stephen Bartlett
Sweaty in Cancun...

II. Zapatista message and student march/ Convergence heats up at Cancun WTO

Sept 9, 2003
Cancun, Mexico

Student March Stopped at Wall of Iron and Riot Police
Zapatista message of solidarity: autonomy and resistance are essential

Fatigue is closing in, but the following happened today: The Via Campesina received a message from the Zapatista Commandantes David and Esther, and from the Sub Marcos. In the introduction the Sub requested that any time these statements were read in the mobilizations here in Cancun, that it should be read by a woman. The National Indigenous Congress joined the Farmers and Indigenous Forum with a brass and clarinet band, Mayan rituals and burning of copal to the four directions, and lots of soul. SOUL. And this statement, by either David or the Sub: **THE POWERFUL DRINK OUR BLOOD AND DEFECATE DOLLARS.** But autonomy is a fundamental part guaranteeing our right to think, decide, govern ourselves and guide our own destiny. Self-determination resists on resistance and leads to autonomy. Resistance makes us stronger because we don't give in, we don't give up, and collectively we start to develop ourselves. Zapata said the land belongs to the person who works it. Period.

As we were resting out under the big canopy, munching on jalapeños and black beans, the sound of drums approaching filled the hot and humid air. A student march from their encampment towards Kilometer Zero (the entrance to the long peninsula where the WTO convention would be taking place) roared past us. Mexican youth, European youth, North American youth, and now some indigenous Via Campesina families marched to the beat of drum corps dressed in black and orange, puppets, masked figures from prehistory and lots of beautiful people. About 600-800 strong we walked about 2 kilometers, taking over the roads at will, until we reached the Kukulcan Avenue and a giant police operation with 8 foot tall barricades stretched about 100 yards across a wide intersection just beyond the fountain of the seashells, with myriad identical black helmeted figures lined up behind the iron wall.

There, instead of mixing it up with the police, the youth circled around and a leader of the

National Indigenous Congress, speaking into a megaphone and holding ritual objects, spoke to us in his native Otonomi and in Spanish about the voice that our ancestors have given us, the thoughts we have inherited from them, and the truth we wish to live out in resisting the powers that would destroy us, our culture, our lives.

The people in the tourist zone out on the peninsula could not reach Cancun center for hours because of the police blockade, and we are all wondering whether the campesino march planned for tomorrow will be able to get any further than the students did today, though we are likely to be 15,000 strong tomorrow... as I speak buses from all over Mexico are arriving with farmers and indigenous folk.

Tomorrow the WTO opening ceremony is scheduled to take place, at about the same time as we will be marching in the blazing sun toward the Convention Center... an 11 kilometer stretch upon which it is estimated that there will be no less than 6-8 barricade police blockades in position.

Meanwhile, some 200 Koreans have been having colorful funeral processions for the WTO, with a giant bower that looks like a giant birthday cake, shaded by a cloth, that says, THE WTO, Dead and Gone, as the Korean protesters chanted their most joyous chant of death. Beautiful stuff.

Yesterday was a most beautiful and media-savvy action that got front pages in all the local, provincial and regional newspapers. Some 30 youth got completely naked and then lay down on the Langosta Beach sands, derrieres in the air, in the form of the letters NO OMC, No WTO in Spanish. This photo was followed by some 15 pages of reports about the Campesino Forum, with interviews with the leaders of Via Campesina and photos of the bust of Emiliano Zapata overlooking the amassed indigenous peoples.

So life is not dull in Cancun, and is likely to become even less dull as the week progresses.

I send warm regards from the province of Quintana Roo, Mexico, in the hottest weather I have experienced in a long time... it feels like 99 degrees with 99 percent humidity, and I imagine I am underestimating the heat. Even folk from Managua Nicaragua find it stifling hot here. But spirits are high, and Esther of the Zapatistas gave us words of truth to chew on and march on. Que Viva la Mujer Indigena!

Stephen Bartlett
Cancun Mexico

III. The Smell of Death in the Air at WTO

September 11 midday,
Cancun, Mexico

Cancun: Death at Kilometer Zero
Shame in the WTO

Friends and Colleagues:

Hara Kiri ritual performed at KM 0

Yesterday Kyung Hae Lee, a Korean farmer who has been fighting the World Trade Organization (WTO) for a decade or more, and fighting for farmers for 30 years, climbed up upon the barricade fence no sooner had our great farmers' march reached Kilometer Zero in the baking midday heat. Hundreds of riot police lined the far side of this seemingly impenetrable wall. His fist in the air high above the crowd, he gesticulated in great righteous anger. Fellow Koreans began using the great funeral bower to batter the fence, bending it gradually over. I expected tear gas at any moment. Via Campesina leaders and members were on the far right side knocking down the fence at the same time.

Suddenly, the Korean man was no longer on top of the fence, but others on top were shouting to clear away a space, and calling for a *medico*, for a doctor, and screaming about a wounded man. As the world later learned, it was the Korean farmer who had stabbed himself in the heart, a fatal blow, in the honorable Asian tradition of Hara Kiri. Last night television sets projected the image repeatedly of the man falling back, head flung back, dark blood flowing from his perforated chest. Not suicide, say Asians to journalists, not suicide, but the honorable Hara Kiri, to kill oneself in the presence of one's enemy. Shortly after he was carried away by medics accompanying the march, a cloud blocked out the sun and it rained upon all present, a welcome relief from the intense heat. People smiled in joy at the welcome coolness of the rain.

The Via Campesina farmers and the students, who had come to an agreement about tactics and coordination, continued to work on the barricade. Unfortunately, a group of unknown youth who appeared to be gang members came with chains wrapped on their wrists and shopping carts full of stones to pelt the riot police. They even elbowed fellow demonstrators out of their way. Their tactics, the hails of stones, impeded the farmers from streaming through a gap they had created in the fence. A retreat back from the fence was called by campesino leaders.

The National Indigenous Congress brass band struck up a tune back behind the fountain in the middle of the large roundabout, drawing many in the crowd back away from the barricade. All throughout we expected tear gas, which never came. Perhaps for the presence on both sides of the barricades of international press?

Standing over the scene was a large billboard with a photo of the Cancun peninsula of sand and sea and hotels, which read: A Warm Welcome, Visitors to Cancun! Some welcome, eh?

Pirates of the Caribbean

Earlier in the final plenary of the farmers' forum, Vandana Shiva had characterized the WTO as an organization undertaking the Pirating of our seeds and cultural inheritance. Pat Mooney, a Canadian GMO researcher and anti-intellectual property advocate, gave a well-received speech to the mostly Mexican indigenous farmers in which he

talked about the summer movie *Pirates of the Caribbean*. He said that in the movie the pirates had an unwritten code of conduct; so too in the WTO there was an unwritten code of conduct. As with the pirates the true rules of the game were never told to anyone, and as with the pirates, the rules continually changed according to the whims of the most powerful pirates. Same in the WTO, said Pat Mooney of ETC Group. He said the problem with the Pirates of the Caribbean at the WTO was they they did not recognize that they have already been dead for 200 years, and that they had come here to meet among a sort of cemetery, the headstones being the long lines of tourist hotels planted in the sands of the Cancun peninsula. The cadavers, he said, could be seen baking in the sun on the sands. Our job, he said, was to keep the dead buried and away from the living, that is, us, the impoverished, the farmers and indigenous peoples of the world barred entry into this cemetery by police lines and barricades. The assembly loved this speech, and made us North Americans present happy too.

Networking/Media work at the Barricades

After the biggest fights at the barricades had calmed down, I met some of the Korean Trade Unionists, who informed me that they had raised half a million dollars to bring their delegation of 250 Koreans, representing about 200 organizations in Korea to protest and bear witness at this convergence here in Mexico. I was interviewed by journalists from Korea reporting on the protests and who were astonished to learn that most US farmers do not benefit from the mammoth subsidy system, but continue to lose their lands to corporate growers and transnational corporations like Tyson, Purdue, Conagra, Cargill, ADM, etc... and all the fast food industry which profits from cheap, under the cost of production foods. US citizens willing to make honest critiques of our governments' policies continue to be welcome wherever we go, and interviewed and received with open arms.

Barricade turned into Modern Art

In the late afternoon after searching out some food up the hill from the battle line, I returned with the two Korean journalists, to find the remains of the fence, now a miasma of twisted steel. A gap had been opened in this modern sculpture to exclusion and people were being allowed in or out, one at a time, employees from the hotels who had walked kilometers from their places of work, coming out little by little, and people with proof of hotel reservations or WTO accreditations, allowed to pass inside. In front of this spot corn seeds had been spread on the pavement in the form of the words NO OMC and two candles burned on either side. The message is obvious. The sacred corn, threatened with extinction by the WTO and its intellectual property rules and so-called free trade agenda.

Rumors were beginning to circulate in the media about the Korean, some said he was gravely wounded, others that he was dead. Today, we all know he is dead, and the Via Campesina and the Farmers forum and students will all be marching in less than one hour from this moment, from the camps down to the spot at Kilometer Zero where the act was done. The Korean delegates will be marching from their hotel on the inside of the peninsula to meet up with the farmers and youth in a large encampment at the roundabout, where acts and ceremonies will take place.

Crossing the police line

I finally left those remaining at the barricade and, showing my WTO accreditation cards, passed like a magician through the line of riot police, and began the 4 mile walk to the Fair Trade Exposition, and rejoined others of the Rural Coalition delegation and our board members and colleagues. Tired and extremely sticky, I took a swim in the sea, had a beer and then dried off and went up the stairs to the Fair Trade Reception, to hear, among others, the Nobel Laureat Rigoberta Menchu praise Fair Trade as the humane and peaceful response to the trade of exploitation and death represented by the WTO. She also exhorted more people to learn Spanish.

Juan Martinez of the Beehive Collective was present on the roof and we unfurled one of his large Plan Colombia banners and began doing his popular education talks there. Vandana Shiva remembered him from the Cycling Caravan in St. Louis.

INSIDE WTO Action:

About the same time that our great campesino march was taking place, inside the WTO, another act of rebellion was taking place at the opening speech of the president of the WTO, Supachai of Thailand. In the middle of his speech, dozens of NGO delegates stood up, some with tape over their mouths, all holding signs, and faced the front of the room. Walden Bello of the Philippines, Anuradha Mittal of Food First and many others from US and European and other NGOs with the required WTO accreditation had helped organize this action. Their signs read in both English and Spanish: WTO Undemocratic, WTO Anti Development, WTO Obsolete. After a moment, they began chanting: Shame, Shame, Shame, shame... Some in the media, turning to film them and interrupting the speech of Supachai, shouted out questions to the protesters, and when they were escorted out, they followed out too for interviews, entirely disrupting the opening speech.

Friends, Wednesday, Sept 10 was a long, tragic, and powerful day of resistance at the Cancun V Ministerial. And to repeat what the Koreans and other Asians present told the press: Do not use the word suicide, this was Hara Kiri!

The encampment in Lee Kyung Hae's honor will be massing this afternoon at the former sight of the barricades at Kilometer Zero. New barricades have been erected about 50 yards back from yesterday's line, with hundreds of soldiers camping there for the duration as well.

President Fox came and went yesterday in the WTO meetings, pushing for an Agriculture Agreement, but we feel certain that the Pirates of the Caribbean cannot bury the living here at these ill-fated talks, nor can they resuscitate the moribund colonial agenda of the WTO.

From a cyber cafe on the mainland of Mexico (outside the allegorical cemetery of hotels headstones),

Stephen (Esteban) Bartlett

IV. Memorial for Mr. Lee Kyung Hae draws Thunder

Cancún, México

Friday September 12, 2003

The Gods seem very close by here at this clash of wills in Cancún, México. Just minutes after Mr. Hyung Lee committed his final act of symbolic resistance by immolating himself with a dagger at the barricades at Kilometer Zero on Wednesday, a large cloud blocked the sun and cooled our bodies with a welcome shower, reviving our spirits. In retrospect, in my poetic way of thinking, I prefer to view this shower as a blessing sent from the powers of Creation, to mark an act of profound protest with a pure, self-less meaning. Mr. Lee who left behind him a wife and children, and a community he represents and a farmers' association he had led. Mr. Lee who had attempted this same act unsuccessfully in 1995, hunger struck for 30 days in Geneva at the WTO earlier this year and then came to Cancun ready to climb upon the barricade and then use a dagger on himself in a symbolic show that even in death there is power. (He had not told a soul what he planned to do, but some of his closest friends had noticed he was acting a bit different than usual, I am told.) (I later learned that his daughter had been surprised to discover the countryside burial sight of Mr. Lee's mother had been cleaned up before Mr. Lee left for Cancun.)

And then yesterday evening such signs were repeated and amplified. A memorial ceremony among the many that have been undertaken since the terrible event was scheduled to take place at Kilometer Zero yesterday evening... but I will get to that event after describing the build up to it.

The Via Campesina ceremony the night before was still on-going the following morning up at the House of Culture in the Gymnasium where many votive candles still burned under a photo of the fallen Korean farmer, and copal was being burned continually by the indigenous peoples gathered there, some of them chanting in a trance like state. The Via Campesina had then marched yesterday afternoon down to the now sacred spot, sharing the shade from canopies under which dozens of Korean trade unionists and farmers were resting, in the grassy roundabout near the fountain at KM Zero. I got there in the late afternoon and met friends made the day before, Kim Chooy an environmentalist activist who speaks some English and had helped me with an interview with a South Korean newspaper called Reunification. Other friends from Via Campesina and the Hemispheric Social Alliance (trade unionists from Brazil) were there as well. Juan Martinez, alias, Juan Manchu of the Beehive Collective was there with his troupe after a practice performance at the barricades, and he generously gave one of their exquisite political posters on Plan Colombia to Kim Chooy, and she promised to bring him some kimchii she had frozen in a hotel room.

Paul Nicholzen, a Basque farmer and Via Campesina leader joined us with wonderful news of a Via Campesina action in the heart of the WTO Convention Center. Credentials to enter the Convention Center had been scrounged up somehow for a number of Via Campesina and NGO people. They entered the WTO Convention Center and the large press conference room, and proceeded to lay down votive candles and signs and handing

precise moment Johnbo, an indigenous leader of the American Indian Movement I had the honor of meeting in Chiapas in 2001 approached the altar with his drum and I translated his words into Spanish: I am going to make a march now, friends. Follow with me if you would like. I want to make a march! And began beating his drum and singing high and hard in the way of Turtle Island Native Peoples. He headed off into the road leading to the barricades and, 11 kilometers further on, into the Convention Center and the WTO. At that moment, it seemed like nothing could stop such spirit from reaching whatever goal it sought. We walked in water up above our ankles, and we walked fast, almost wildly. The rain poured down even harder, but we were all wailing now, our mouths wide open, chanting, almost running in the dark, and now the Koreans struck up a protest song and shoved their clenched fists up into the deluge, with joy and determination. The native drum and wailing mixed with the chants of the unionists, the ones who had battered the barricades with their funeral bower on that fateful march for Mr. Lee.

The newly constructed fall-back barricades were unmanned in the downpour. But they were built to withstand much of the abuse wreaked upon the first barricade, with heavy concrete blocks weighing them down and built in a rectangle with heavy bars reinforcing their squared off form. Where there had been a fence before, was now a steel cage 10 feet tall with barbed wire on top. Candles went up to the top of the fence, shielded by someone's styrofoam plate stuck on barbed wire. The Koreans started to organize spirited shouts, instructing us in Korean. We followed the actions of the Koreans at the appointed moment. It seemed we were being asked to make a primal scream, on cue. And so we did, a terrifying sound that comes not from the throat but from the bowels, even from inside the legs, from the ground. We staggered our breathing so that the wail would be seamless and it made our skin pop goosebumps. At that moment a big water cannon truck with powerful headlights mounted on top reached the second fence, about 30 feet behind the front barricade box structure, and tried to see what we were up to. Trucks of troops began to rumble out of the blackness and riot police streamed out in the slick wet darkness. Now we engaged in another activity, we backed up about 100 feet and, on signal, all sprinted to the fence and lunged at it, kicked it, all the while shrieking like wild people. More primal screams, and the lights of the security vehicles lit, trying to probe the mystery of this sound.

Some students were attracted to our noise and came to break up concrete and throw rubble across the fence. The Koreans organized a last lunge at the fence and then turned the march around, back to the encampment.

The rain started to let up some. We relit our candles and formed a circle, hearing beautiful songs sung by the Koreans, then some Spanish songs were sung. We backed up until our circle was about 250 strong and sang more, then we snaked the circle around the traffic circle, around the fountains, until the students, coming from another memorial service at the Plaza de la Reforma, came into earshot with their drum corps and flaming torches. Their front lines had young women dressed in ghoulish white death shrouds and holding long torches aloft in the air. The drummers and majorettes with their orange wooden guns and black chinese peasant hats, and the rhythm tight, joyful and slightly martial despite the polyrhythm beat. We all laid our candles down before the altar, where large banners eulogized Lee and people were leaving messages. I met Anuradha Mittal and we walked to the barricades to show her. Now the riot police were lined up two or

three deep up against the front barricade steel rectangles, short and dark, their indigenous skin color blending in with the night under their black uniforms.

A young Mexican woman drenched like myself to the skin was reprimanding them: We are doing this for you and for your children, idiots. Why do such a job when it will help condemn your children to poverty and dependency. She was really letting them have it, while a lone youth broke up concrete to one side and tried to hurl it over the barricade. The woman asked him to hold up on that: aguante, aguante, joven. The youth held up, but paced angrily like a tiger in a zoo. Anuradha wondered aloud how much these soldiers might be earning for this special repression duty. I translated her question into Spanish and yelled it to their ears, but no response. The woman picked it up: they make a lousy 3 pesos to sell their souls, coño. Wake up, brothers, Wake up before it is too late!

Back at the encampment the youth march turned unexpectedly and headed away from the barricades... to WALMART, I heard, flames twirling and spirits high. Now exhausted and drenched, from my clothing to my passport buried deep in my leather briefcase, I heard one could catch a public bus for the long ride to the other entrance to the peninsula and the long ride to within 5.5 kilometers of this cursed barricade. For 6 pesos, about \$0.60 US, I got on a bus, and rode for an hour with Cancun workers headed to their janitorial jobs in the megahotels along the Cemetery Hotel Strip that is Cancun.

I cannot predict the signs that will accompany today's or tomorrow's actions, but momentarily I will be attempting to enter the WTO Convention Center for the first time to take part in a protest at a briefing about the US Trade position. A simultaneous action will be taking place when this same pirate heads to the Hyatt to meet with none other than the CEOs of WALMART, the GAP, etc..., etc... where they will be met by another group of protesters. I just heard that all buses have stopped going toward the Convention Center because it is believed that students occupying some towers near there might be armed... no doubt with little wooden sticks for holding their signs. (Later, we learned of the banner hanging on the 70 meter tall crane, by three US climbers, who later in the heat, took off their clothing. The banner read: Que Se Vayan Todos, the slogan of the Argentinian movement against neoliberal economic policies.) It appears that new tactics are being developed for the last days of this bizarre surreal zoo known as a WTO Ministerial.

I feel like one of the ants depicted on the political posters of the Beehive Collective (check them out at www.beehivecollective.org), monkey wrenching the infernal military-industrial-lifescience complex of death. Globalize the struggle, Globalize Hope.

A collective fist of determination in the air from Cancun and the sign of peace on the other hand,

May the spirits of wind, rain and lightning protect us all, and make the land fertile, and bless our crops and the blood in our veins.

Stephen Bartlett

V. Non-Violent People Power Prevails at Cancun WTO

Friends:

Today's final peoples' march came together in a convergence not soon to be forgotten in the annals of anti-neoliberal actions.

Picture this if you can: two agile and strong-armed Korean trade unionists and farmers squatting on top of the barricade that to many appeared impenetrable. In their hands the threaded ends of three 200 foot long ropes that resembled tropical vines with many interwoven strands, which they are tying to strategic points in the fence. On the ground in long rows are hundreds of fellow protesters loosely holding the sisal ropes, black block folk with kerchiefs and goggles around their necks, hippies, Korean trade unionists, latin american feminists, Via Campesina leaders with their green caps and scarfs, peace lovers from Europe and Australia, from Seattle and Louisville and Washington D.C. On each rope there are at least 150 people, awaiting the signal. The Koreans on the barricade have arms thicker than the multi-stranded super-ropes they are tying and adjusting. The ripples on the rope are felt not only by those ready to pull but by the thousands of others standing all around this scene, the energy of conviction, determination and power rippling out into the throng. Behind the fence there are hundreds of riot police, a giant water cannon truck and the probability of untold numbers of reinforcements and tear gas bombs. The people on the fence, most ready for tear gas with kerchiefs, improvised filters and goggles, have been menacing the police with shouts of 'puto' (a vulgar version of 'sell outs') and a crowd behind them numbering in the several thousands, emboldened by our numbers.

The strapping Korean on the barricades is up and down and all over the fence, using a bolt cutter handed to him by UNAM students, breaking the links. Everyone waits patiently. He makes the sign he is ready, by crossing his arms in front of him, and then descends. A shout goes up and those holding the rope pull, rhythmically in great heaves, and the fence moves. Another shout, the pulling stops. Some further adjustments are made, a few more links cut with the bolt cutters, one of the ropes retied where it was cut by barbed wire. Again the signal, a loud shout in Korean, everyone pulls. The fence starts to hop, then rises, then a section rips apart. Thousands clap and shout. Off to one side, women activists are using hand clippers to open gaps in the fence all along, and are working on the second fence too. This wall is going to pieces either quickly or slowly, one way or another.

This process goes on for about 1.5 hours until the entire fence, ten foot tall, ten foot deep steel cages loaded with 3 foot concrete blocks, front and back, comes apart like so much buttery steel when faced by a coordinated and intelligent assault. We all roar in delight, but also know the tough part may soon begin... when we all will march into the opening toward the Convention Center some 11 kilometers distant, behind at least 5 more barricades that could be closed behind retreating police squads, not to mention tear gas and clubs, water cannons, absolute force under military command, broken heads, people overcome by the gas, arrests, pain, fear, violent response to violent repression.

A Korean on a bull horn is translated by a woman who can speak Spanish and English. Everyone is asked to back up a few feet and the entire crowd is asked to sit down. After a few moments and some catcalls in three or four languages to those who haven't seemed to have heard, most of the crowd has sat down. The rubble of the broken fence is cleared from the road, thrown in tall mangled heaps. An opening wide enough

for two trucks to pass has been made. Some youth try to rush forward to start fighting with the police but black block security details pull them back. (Yes, the black block were in charge of security, a new `mature black block` according to one of the organizers, a miraculous development for those present in Genova, for example.)

It is announced that there will be a prayer. Silence falls and people bow their heads in silent prayer. Koreans and Via Campesina peasant leaders and students all turn their backs on the police and face the multitude. They announce that soon the WTO will be burned in effigy, after a speaker or two. A Korean said that the WTO must die, or we would die of poverty and oppression. He said that comrade Lee Hyung gave his life in order for us to make greater efforts to destroy the WTO and get it out of agriculture. More speeches, loud shouts from a woman from South Africa: Amaaaandlaa! The crowd cheers back Amaandlaa! The Guatemalan indigenous leader Juan Tiney of CONIC and the Via Campesina talked of the meaning of destroying the wall of exclusion of the WTO. He says that the 23 countries who inside the WTO negotiations have unified to resist an unjust agriculture agreement are doing so because of the unbearable pressure of the social movements within their countries. Good news is told: Korean protesters, together with the Korean delegation to the WTO, went into the WTO convention center as we were demolishing the super-wall with people power.

There is some confusion. One of the speakers said we would soon be walking in a peaceful manner toward the lines of police and the water cannon blocking our way. Later, someone else says, each person must make their own decision, but the plan now is to withdraw from the fence and not attempt to cross the opening. That having destroyed the so-called unbreakable barricade with our own bare hands, was sufficient to demonstrate the strength and organization and creativity of our movement. That the WTO was doomed to die, due to our renewed strength and determination to carry on the fight Lee Hyung had fought for so long and in such a total way.

And then the WTO symbol, yellow with red ink effigy with a head, whose neck was in the noose of our serpentine rope, was set ablaze and burned quickly and totally, falling in little shreds of ash to the ground. The crowd roared its approval. Then a large US flag was strung up and set ablaze as well, to great pleasure for most of the onlookers. One North American in the vicinity yelled: "Death to fascism in North America!"

The crowd broke into dancing and drumming once more. Koreans joined in and started playing their gongs, and turning it into a snake dance and then linking arms so that dancers could pass underneath... in joy we snaked by each other holding each other's hands and jumping for joy, while thousands of others looked on. Some in the crowd who had come ready for street fighting with police to clear a path for us to walk through, looked sullen and undecided. The collective, patient and decisive ease with which the fence had been ripped apart, despite all that linked reinforced steel and all those huge concrete blocks weighing it down, had been far more than anyone could have hoped. But there was energy still to be released and the dance helped release some of it, for some of us.

My brother Andrew and I walked up to the fence and into the fence. A press conference was going on in what could be viewed as a zone of neutrality. The hundreds of helmeted and shielded police stood around kind of sheepish, since no one was intent on walking through an object we had spent so much ingenuity to remove. Not a single stone had been thrown.

After a while, some young US anarchists started shouting in English that they were going to advance, that others should get out of their way, etc... People decided it would be better to isolate these few unsatisfied individuals and move most of the demonstrators back away from the now impotent barricade. We did so, hoping most of the demonstrators would similarly begin moving back to `Ground Zero`, the new name for where Mr. Lee had sacrificed himself to what appeared to be a new unity and respect for one another. (The vast majority of the thousands who had struggled there at this barricade to exclusion walked back away from the barricade. I do not know how much fighting or arrests there might have been after our departure, but it was obvious that our goal had been accomplished in a powerfully symbolic and non-violent way. And besides, we could always take a bus the long way around to the Convention Center. That really wasn't the point anymore.

My analysis is that the self-immolation of Mr. Lee raised the struggle to a different level, and put the highly experienced Korean demonstrators at the center of authority for the actions. The two days of vigils and actions organized by the Koreans and their permanent encampment helped them establish relationships with the broader movement, whose leaders began consulting not only among the usual collaborators (or rivals?), but directly with the Koreans themselves, in a manner unified by the tragedy and seriousness of Mr. Lee's ultimate sacrifice.

I myself had become involved in such conversations. The night of the first vigil, UNAM students had approached one of the Korean women who spoke some English, but I was needed to assist in the conversation as translator, as I had during the torrential rainstorm. She told them that the Koreans were not going to do actions against the wall that night nor the next due to the vigils and memorial services planned, but that Sept 13th would be another matter. This last statement cheered the UNAM students greatly, as they had witnessed the major league organization and militancy of the Korean delegation during the Campesino March. The following evening at 6 p.m. another vigil had been planned. (The Koreans had learned that if they wanted an event to start at 7 in Mexico, they needed to invite everyone an hour beforehand.) This time was set for a meeting between students and the Korean delegation.

So I had come back out to the Center of Cancun and to Ground Zero Kilometer Zero after another action inside the WTO Convention Center (I will tell about later) in order to help translate for this consultation, which took place to the great satisfaction of all concerned, and promised a very dramatic event indeed. A general coordinating meeting later that night at 10 p.m. would reconfirm the details of the plan for today's action.

And so it came to pass. After the great event, I ran into fellow hunger strikers from the Taco Bell action with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers last Feb 25 –March 5 and we all decided to go and eat together, as we had never actually eaten together, only starved together for 10 days. We shared peices of the historic sissal rope that defeated the super barricade and tied them around our wrists, ready to continue this struggle for sanity and justice.

I will sign off for now as I am exhausted, but hope to write something more upon my return home tomorrow.

With renewed hope and joy at the unity and non-violence of today's unique, and diversely soulful protest,

From torridly hot Cancun of the warm-hearted Mexico,

Stephen

VI. WTO Dying, Sacrifice and Hope Live On...

Louisville, Kentucky

September 16, 2003

Reflections and Further Observations on the 'AlterWorld' Convergence against the WTO in Cancún México, September 7-14, 2003. (Also, please read 'Mr. Lee in his own words' by Laura Carlsen of the Interhemispheric Resource Center (IRC), at: <http://www.americaspolicy.org/columns/amprog/2003/0309lee.html>)

Friends:

At home with my family now, if slightly wrung out after the momentous events that I was a part of in Cancun, I am aware that perhaps not all of you have been able to read or hear about some of the issues at stake at this V meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO). I hope fill that gap, without going into too many of the details of the complexities involved in the issue of subsidies, not to mention the multiple issues and political forces at work among the countries of the world involved in the negotiations, etc... This will be the last report about the WTO in Cancun to the wide list. (It is long, but I think it will clarify and inform in a memorable way the essence of this event. Read it at your leisure.) Thank you for all those who forwarded these reports, and for those who expressed so many warm messages of appreciation and solidarity!

Although I was psychically prepared and determined to walk non-violently in the manner of Gandhi into the breach of the demolished barricade, into the columns of riot police at KM 0+500, in the end the protest strategy on Sept 13th did not call for that, so I, like most everyone else, with one dramatic exception, came back intact. I am grateful for that.

Note: I have pasted below my own final thoughts two articles published in the Sunday Sept 14th *La Jornada* of Mexico, an editorial relating the outcome of these WTO talks to the on-going FTAA negotiations and an article that describes for a second time, in excellent detail, Saturday's march against "Neoliberal Globalization and Militarization" which I described in my last epistle to you about 'People Power'. This article in the original Spanish can be seen on the web, with photos at, www.jornada.unam.mx for Sept 14, 2003 at: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2003/sep03/030914/019n1eco.php?origen=index.html&fly=1> (*the English translations below are mine.)

Just what was the fight about?

As I was waiting at the airport in Cancun to leave on Sunday (yesterday), a friend from Maine I bumped into told me that members of a US-based business lobbying group he overheard in line for the flight check-in were reportedly considering staying longer, "if

the negotiations were going to be prolonged beyond September 14th.” A similar conversation I had had with one of Venezuela’s official trade negotiators on a public bus on Friday night had given me confirmation of just how much of an impasse had been reached inside the Convention Center, confirming what the local Mexican press were writing. My friend from Maine also told me of being physically pushed out of a US trade briefing at the Hyatt to which CEOs and corporate VPs from Walmart, the GAP, and other multinationals had been invited. An official US trade negotiator had pointed his fingers into my friend’s chest and pushed him to the door, making me suspect just how frustrated and defensive they were becoming. Hey, the super-wealthy corporate folk who were contributing to their bosses’ electoral campaign wanted value for their money! For all we know, this might have been do or die career-wise for some of these negotiators. No wonder they are asking for more time, even as bad as things look. “This couldn’t be happening to us,” they must think. “Aren’t we the good guys?”

As of late Sept 15th, the talks had to be officially closed due to a walk-out on the part of the majority of countries, resulting in a complete and public failure! The Kenyan trade representative was the first to stand up and leave. The US Trade Representative was (in bitter spite?) quoted as saying he absolutely would not allow any NGOs to be present at the closing ceremony, such as it was. Headlines in major newspapers are declaring the WTO negotiations ‘failed’ over the impasse created around agricultural issues, the most public of them being the enormous commodity subsidies, both direct and indirect that ‘support’ the ‘overproductionist,’ export-oriented, industrial model of farming on the chemically fertilized soils of the richest countries in the world. Oh, and did I mention our system is also mainly ‘unsustainable, inhumane, monopolistic?’ The question of subsidies is a mixed bag, as I will discuss below, but what is not mixed to many of us is that corporate agro-industrial, export and fast food monopolies and a sustainable, democratic, local form of agriculture simply cannot in the long run co-exist, just as GMO corn and organic corn cannot co-exist due to pollen-driven gene drift.

The ‘inside’ action I took part in on Thursday, Sept 11th well-illustrated some of these issues. Told by a trusted colleague midday on Sept 11th to meet at the Cafeteria in the WTO Convention Center at 1:45 p.m. for some political theater, I had an excuse to use my difficultly-obtained WTO credentials and to see first hand just what kind of cage the NGOs and press people were experiencing in the security labyrinth of the WTO, and perhaps to have some fun? Get arrested? A woman I had yet to meet in person, Lori Wallach of Public Citizen, eyed my credential suspiciously and asked me what organization I worked for, to make sure our group would not be infiltrated. Trying to be inconspicuous while we rehearsed and planned our action, we took refuge down a lateral hallway, blocking the passage of some press people who began to complain. Once we had our instructions, and Walden Bello and a fellow from Canada had donned their new faces, one of Robert Zoellick and the other of the EU leader of the agricultural trade negotiations Monsieur Pascal Lamy, we began our demonstration, following behind them. Walden hammed it up to great effect, as we entered the major hall leading to the lounge/cafeteria/press area: “Out of my way! Can’t you see who I am? I am Richard Zoellick and I am in charge around here. Make way! I want to make the world safe for Monsanto, and Cargill and Archer Daniels and Midland. Don’t you know that the Supermarket of the World is going to feed the hunger?!” The press began to swarm around us as we chanted “US EU, Corporate Greed, Undermining Farmers’ Needs” over

and over, holding phrases aloft: Stop the Bullying, No new Proposals of Death for Farmers, Support Small Farmers, etc... After the skits which went into more detail satirizing the hypocritical position of the US negotiators, we turned around and walked back chanting: Support Small Farmers, support small farmers... And then many of us were interviewed, a woman from my childhood newspaper *Newsday* asking me a few questions. Security details observed us, but left us alone. NGOs had been banned from US briefings after Greenpeace had an action on GMOs, dumping a sack of the seeds at the dias, an action that provoked an almost violent reaction by an obnoxious, shouting rice industry lobbyist posing as a journalist who screamed for the Greenpeace group to leave the room. He was itching for a fight.

The night prior the Rural Coalition, including farm advocates and US farmers representing the National Family Farm Coalition and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) had held a meeting attended by more than 100 people including a range of people from US legislators to Via Campesina representatives to discuss the US subsidy issue. A study on the effects of withdrawing subsidies from agricultural commodities at the University of Tennessee, had come out with somewhat counter-intuitive conclusions. The study showed that the dropping of subsidies had not led to a decrease in production and a corresponding rise in commodity price, looking at subsidy elimination in Canada and in the sugar industry in the U.S. Instead, what had happened was an accelerated concentration of family and small corporate-style farms into even larger and more concentrated farm operations owned almost exclusively by corporations. Once the bankruptcies and land sales were complete, the corporations who now owned the productive assets (the land, machinery, etc...) continued to plant the same acreages in the same crops, taking perhaps a loss at the bottom due to low commodity prices but making up for it in the increased power of verticle integration and the ability to set prices at both ends due to their market share. They were willing to over-produce commodities whose value was below the cost of production because they allowed them to fully integrate at all levels, and reap large profits overall.

One proposed solution to this conundrum, the same being advocated by the Korean Farmers League, the Via Campesina, the National Family Farm Coalition, etc... contains the following elements: putting a governmental system in place known as 'supply management' (not unlike the quotas and price supports of the import liberalization-wounded tobacco program), with a minimum guaranteed price floor, and restricting imports that might destabilize such protection of local agricultural production. This simultaneously reduces supply, raises prices and takes some of the extreme risk out of the already risky job of producing crops from land with weather and other uncontrollable factors one cannot always count on. But for some, the words 'supply management' make them "see red" or smell 'socialism' or worse, even those treading the vicious cycle of ever-lower prices and ever-larger market gluts and commodity dumping. FDR put into practice systems based on this solution, which led to some of the best years for farmers in the U.S., the late 40s through the early 60s, the years that made the US so productive in agriculture and its countryside so affluent. When corporations started dictating Ag Policy in the US in the mid 60s, pushing for overproduction and export-oriented production, is when farmers' started losing their shirts.

Inside the official NGO center provided by the WTO stacks of booklets are available for the taking, once you have passed through the credential check and the metal detectors.

Two of these booklets are pure, surreal Orwellian pieces of *new-speak*. One is entitled “10 misunderstandings about the WTO” and proceeds to list everything we know to be true about the WTO, but arrogantly stating that these are “misunderstandings.” The list goes as follows: 1. The WTO dictates policy, 2. The WTO is for free trade at any cost, 3. Commercial interests take priority over development, 4...and over the environment, 5...and over health and safety, 6. The WTO destroys jobs, worsens poverty, 7. Small countries are powerless in the WTO, 8. The WTO is the tool of powerful lobbies, 9. weaker countries are forced to join the WTO, 10. the WTO is undemocratic.

This is an accurate list of critiques the WTO-contracted writer must have downloaded from one of our websites.

Then it goes on to cheerfully “debunk” these *little* misunderstandings, in a naïve and simplistic textbook prattle. There are illustrations too, which to my mind are as indicting as the list: on the page that says the WTO does NOT dictate to governments on issues such as food safety, and human health and safety, and commercial interests do NOT override, there is a picture of someone with a gas mask attempting to eat a hamburger. What is this supposed to mean?

I really don’t understand how the WTO could publish a piece of propaganda of this level of oversimplification, as if addressing 3rd graders. Was the late Mr. Lee Kyung Hae so simple that he didn’t understand that the bankruptcies and suicides of the farmers in his association were directly related to trade liberalization of agricultural products in the 90s? Was he the victim of a misunderstanding? Was he deluded to be wearing a shirt that read: The WTO KILLS FARMERS?

To give you a sense of the intensity and breadth of the protests that surrounded this year’s WTO, I will simply list some of the newspaper headlines that appeared in the local Quintana Roo, Yucatan and local Mexican papers during the week:

Below the full size photo of 30 or so nude bodies laid out on the tourist beach on Monday Sept 8, the Headline, formed with human curves the same letters: NO OMC (NO WTO). All the local papers led with the photo and the headline.

Coffee growers demand FAIR TRADE

Cancun Paralyzed by ‘Globalifobico’ Acts

The Poor Countries Gain Strength

Quit the Farse (over the photo of the banner Que Se Vayan Todos, hung from a crane)

They knock them down (the fences)

Lesson of Peace and Life: Global Critics tear down the barricades and nothing more

The WTO has No Future

The WTO is Practically Dead

Clean fight of the Anti-Imperialists

The WTO negotiations will end in Failure

Marcos calls for Derailing of the WTO

The Agricultural Battle Begins in WTO

NGOs interrupt opening speech of Panitchpakdi

Protest from 70 meters up by 3 nude US protesters: ‘Que Se Vayan Todos’ said the huge banner they hung from the crane, recalling the neoliberal economic meltdown in Argentina.

Greenpeace activists chain themselves to freighter carrying 40,000 tons of GMO corn in Veracruz; in negotiations force shipment back to New Orleans

Protest in support of the Group of 23

NGOs access restricted (in Convention Center)

The WTO has already failed: Via Campesina

We are obliged to eat GMOs

They threw stones until they got tired

Multitudinous Protest

Tourism hurt by Protests

Tense protest at the entrance to the hotel zone

Megamarch

No injuries, no deaths in protest, say police (Sept 13 protest)

The last news I received reading *La Jornada* of yesterday September 15th (by the same author of the article 'Korean official language of yesterday's protest'), describes yet another memorial service at Kilometer Zero, but this one with family members of the late Mr. Lee Kyung Hae who had come from Korea and Canada respectively, done on a white washed stage that had been erected there by Via Campesina. A group of Italian Trade Negotiators had also come to Kilometer Zero, evidently for a photo op, and had a talk with Rafael Alegria of Via Campesina under the canopies in the encampment. (They evidently had little to offer, but after listening to the demands of the Via Campesina that agriculture being taken out of the WTO, they asked Rafael whether they could express their condolences at the altar, to which he responded that they would have to consult with the Koreans about that.) But when without first doing so they went to express their condolences at the altar and be photographed there, Korean activists angrily ran out and waved their straw hats at them as if they were flies. When they retreated to their vehicle, they were surrounded, and the protesters began chanting: 'Down, down WTO' along with the angry Koreans. Some pounded on the front hood of the car. One Korean said: you represent the position of the European Union which has killed so many Korean farmers. Finally nerves calmed enough and the vehicle was allowed to move. The chauffeur accelerated out of there in a hurry once given a chance.

A monument to the fallen Korean martyr Lee Kyung Hae is being planned for the place where he fell. So I find myself thinking there may yet be a reason to travel back to the torridly-hot mass tourism machine that Cancun has become... the next time to pay my respects to a fellow farmer who made the ultimate sacrifice, at a strategic and powerful moment of history. (end)

Excerpts from an Editorial: The Failure of the WTO announces that of the FTAA

From *La Jornada* of Mexico, Sept 14, 2003 (*as translated by Stephen Bartlett)

The WTO meeting realized in Cancun is ending, as foreseen, with a complete failure that is not noisy because the atmosphere recalls the wake of an important mafioso in which those who owe him money speak in low voices because they don't know what is going to happen to them but they have negotiated for the best piece of the succession.

The meeting tried to revolve around a previous agreement between Washington and Brussels to pay the bill for all the others without abandoning the basic subsidies for their

respective agricultural products—which are equivalent to export dumping—nor to back down on their protectionism against products from the countries excluded from the restricted club of the US and the European Union (EU). This same club resolved to focus on an attempt to divide the countries of the so-called Third World who are the victims of this dumping of basic food staples and find themselves harmed in addition by the oligopolies of the giant transnationals that export GMO seeds and the technological packet that accompanies them and which are prohibitively expensive for small farmers.

In the end, neither Europe nor the US are well-suited for growing tropical crops, nor are the countries where such products grow powerful enough in the world market and, as a result, it looked easier to make some concessions.

For the conflict between the EU and the US was added the great difference with the Cairns Group, composed by large agricultural exporter nations such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and Brazil that, at the same time are importers of industrial technology. This group conditions its policies towards the US and the EU towards the elimination of tariffs to their agricultural and livestock exports and to the the unloyal competition in rural production of countries such as those in the Middle East. That is to say, that the discussion can be summed up as one simple concept: if you keep us from earning a livelihood from products in which we are competitive, we have no reason to open our market to you in the other areas (such as services and industrial trade.)

The failure of Cancun brings with it a hard blow to the pretensions of the US to achieve an agreement on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by 2005. In this way Washington tries to save the unsalvageable and tie its car to Mexico and Central America (through NAFTA and CAFTA) while the countries of the Southern Cone try to reinforce Mercosur or the commercial agreements between them, against the FTAA or in order to negotiate from a position of strength, and all the countries of the Cairns Group come closer together, no so much to reclaim or demand as in order to conquer positions in the world market.

Agriculture is fundamental, since the dominance of the food weapon, from time immemorial, has had a decisive political weight, and the oligopolies, backed up by their respective governments, cannot accept the concept of food sovereignty, which is one of the fundamental principles of the massive opposition on the part of the farmers from around the world to this globalization at the service of the large transnational corporations, directed by the financiers of international capitalism.

That is why the WTO is leaving Cancun gravely wounded and the FTAA is further away on the horizon rather than closer. The cadaver of South Korean farmer Lee has not only dealt a terrible moral blow to the WTO, has not only raised the consciousness of millions, but has also provided a heavy portent for the Organization which, even if it survives this failure in Cancun, could still end up in the grave with this farmer who had come from the other side of the world to bury it.

The Death of the WTO was Declared in Korean, yesterday the official language of the protests. (Cancún, México) *A March without Violence.*

Published in *La Jornada* of Mexico, September 14, 2003. By Luis Hernandez Navarro and Fabiola Martinez (as translated by Stephen Bartlett*, Latin America Liaison for Agricultural Missions and member of the Community Farm Alliance, the National Family Farm coalition (US) and the Via Campesina (international)).

(*Translator's note: *Having taken part in many of the meetings to plan this demonstration and having been present at the protest itself, I can confirm that, unlike many other media accounts one reads these days, this one is accurate to the best of my knowledge.*)

Upon the remains of three destroyed metallic barricades, with 1500 people seated in silence upon the wet ground, two Koreans set fire to a couple of cardboard, cloth and wooden figures representing the World Trade Organization (WTO). When the smoke replaced the flames someone took out an enormous US flag and burned it too. The multitude got to their feet and burst out in jubilation.

The barricades that separated the '*alter-worlders*' (*altermundistas*) from the Federal Preventative Police was torn down. The movement had obtained a symbolic triumph. "We have won. We can say with conviction that the WTO will die" one of the Koreans said with assurance. Officially at this point, the protest of September 13th had ended.

Despite the labor participation and the NGOs, the march was led by the memory of Lee. The official language of the mobilization against the WTO was Korean.

The thing is that more than one single initiative, this protest "Against globalization and militarization" had become two distinct actions with the same point of departure and two different ends. One was made up by small contingents of labor people who, as they arrived at Kilometer Zero had a meeting and then withdrew. The other, constituted by the Korean delegation, members of the Via Campesina and youth belonging to groups of direct action, continued to the barricades which separate the hotel zone from the city with one objective: to tear it down.

The fact that such a dissimilar convergence of forces had succeeded in unifying around the reach and the limits of the initiative has only one explanation: the enormous moral and political authority acquired by the Korean delegation among the '*globalization critics*' (*globalicríticos*). The Koreans, on a basis of previous work achieved by the Via Campesina, made possible this miracle that the distinct groups of the Black Block, and the forces of the White Block (promoters of civil disobedience that rejects actions of selective violence) collaborated in the security details and in keeping order in the march, practically without friction. Also achieved was the commitment to not provoke confrontations with the police.

It was because of this convergence that action groups took control of the positions along the barricade (when someone exploded a *paloma* and another lit up a blowtorch), and (these action groups) began to try to break the chains the police had used to bind the barricades together, before the whole contingent (of violent protesters or provocateurs) could arrive. One of the members of the security and order service let it be known: "No provocation will be accepted. We will not permit five idiots to provoke violence. We will not allow anyone to come here to create chaos. We have come well coordinated."

Minutes later a large column of women, among them indigenous women from Chiapas who were acclaimed by the multitude with shouts of "E Z L N" (Zapatista National Army of Liberation), occupied the place in front to control operations.

Mr. Lee

From its beginning, creativity and imagination were the stamp of the march. Marchers had drawn a large picket of the Mayan God of the Moon: "Invincible Female Warrior" to destroy the WTO, and there was a cardboard articulated statue of the figure of Chac, Mayan deity of rain, angry because of "privatization of water," which was pushed the whole way.

Bringing up the rear was a conglomeration of organizations that originally were to be marching in front: unionists, environmentalists, indigenous, students. At the extreme rear were dozens of representatives of the Mexican Electricians Union. For the occasion they had brought out their best slogans, such as: "Fox, entiende, la patria no se vende... Aquí se ve las fuerzas del SME" (Fox, understand, the patria is not for sale... Here you see the forces of the SME.). Further up were some Teamsters from the U.S. and a contingent of the FAT union front of Mexico. Small

commissions of social security workers also arrived, from section 18 of the CNTE and from the Mexican Petroleum Institute.

(I will skip a discussion of the Mexican union groups which came in far fewer numbers than had been claimed in advance, and a speech made at the International Labor Forum decrying too much talk and analysis and not enough mobilization and action).

In any case, the march had a festive mood. The band of Seattle, *International Noise Brigade*, animated the protest indefatigably. Mixing music from around the world, these youth were dressed in grey-black suits with luminous orange stripes, the colors those of the uniform of the sanitation workers from their city. *The Disobedients*, also marked rhythms with tambores and timbales. Very happily following them, with the intention of preserving “peaceful resistance” were dozens of groups from an equal number of causes. There were the representatives of Global Resistance, the Social Network for Public Education in America and FIAN, an organization that promotes the right to food as a fundamental human right.

Further up participating in this celebration were the Women’s Environment Development Organization and members of the Green Party of Italy and the U.S., followed by three youth with long flowery outfits, representing the gay and lesbian community.

About half of the contingent corresponded to the Via Campesina. There were representatives from Uruguay, Canada, Haiti, Mexico, South Africa, and also small producers from Japan, Indonesia, Thailand. Occupying the central place marched the Koreans, with their beige vests and red bands on their right wrists. Surrounding them, as part of the services of order, marched the Black Block.

Dozens of pancartes with the phrase: “WTO Kills Farmers. Lee did not die... The WTO Killed Him!” were carried by the compañeros of Lee Kyung Hae. Three days after his death, his presence had become so strong that, most probably, Cancun will always be associated with his name.

South Korean Militancy

In the South Korean’s farmers’ movement there exists a long tradition of radical struggle coming out of the mobilization for profound agrarian reform. Resistance to the dictatorship has fed them. Under the shadow of the successful distribution of lands in North Korea, rural reforms in the south tried to placate the ghost of communism. The agrarian repartitions distributed to small farmers parcels no larger than 2 hectares (about 5 acres), and established policies of development with generous guaranteed prices for agricultural producers. Farmers acquired a living standard equivalent in many cases to that of the middle class.

Most probably it is this inheritance of radical struggle that led one of their leaders to affirm: “We see that there is a different cultural tradition among the distinct organizations that have come together in Cancun. When we say that we will undertake strong actions, this means strong actions that can lead as a consequence to arrests and injuries.”

The Uruguay Round, that liberalized agricultural markets, turned this situation around. It did away with subsidies and obliged an opening of borders, making it impossible for small land holder family farmers to survive. Gradually the farmers saw their living standard drop until today they are at the level of Mexican farmers. Bankruptcies, abandonment of parcels and the suicides of heads of families became a kind of epidemic.

The rejection of the WTO, then, does not stem from ideological considerations but from profound experience. These policies are condemning the farmers to disappearance. That is why Lee immolated himself. That is why they are today in Cancun struggling as they are.

Campesino Knowledge vs. Robocop Technology

Two women of the cordon protecting the barricade crawl about in and on it. With the help of large metal cutters they cut the metal web and the barbed wire. After a while they are relieved by others. “We are like ants” says one of them.

The barricade is a complex of three distinct structures united by thick chains and transversal reinforcements. Various concrete blocks on the ground make it difficult to move. It is impossible to open it by pushing, leveraging or blowtorching. It is Robocop crowd-control technology.

While the women continue their labors, some Koreans open a way through the throng. Jun Ki Hwan, member of the Planning Committee of the Campesino League of Korea is its leader. From this moment he will take control of the task. He represents farmers know how.

When the chain link is sufficiently broken by the brigade directed by Jun, he ties two thick cords of braided rope to the top of the structure. Giving instructions with a whistle and making signals with his hands, he directs those with the bolt cutters. They are Koreans and youth of many nationalities who pull back on the ropes. They initiate a long battle to create an opening in the barricade. A battle that lasted more than an hour and required the ropes to be relocated periodically. A battle animated from time to time by slogans favoring the Zapatistas. A battle that required five collective pulls, lightened by the ritual drums, in order for them to reach their goal.

Because it was the fifth pull when the fence came apart slowly. The irons twisted as if they were living beings struck through by an immense pain in a struggle between life and death. And when it could no longer resist and gave way to the combination of knowledge of the farmers unified in action, the public plaza became a huge party. The farmers shouted and celebrated with the punk, the Asians with the indigenous. Completely detached from its foundations and set to one side of the road, the metal structure fell victim to the anger and rage of many protesters who kicked it and struck it with sticks.

Then began a new homage to Lee. Once more, after the tearing down of the wall. "We will not allow this death to be in vain. He sacrificed his life to do away with the WTO and to achieve the organization of the peoples," said his compañeros, while the multitude shouted "Lee, Lee, Lee." With the audience seated upon the wet ground, different speakers, most of them Korean, held forth. Some women complained that no women had spoken and toward the end a Mexican and an African woman each spoke. The message heard throughout the distinct voices was the same: "If we were capable of destroying the barriers to the WTO, we will be capable of destroying the institution of the WTO. With the people power we will be able to destroy the WTO and neoliberalism."

The speeches concluded, it was time to burn the Judas WTO. When it had ceased to burn, together with the flag of the stars and stripes, the multitude again broke out in jubilation. The party again. Hundreds of Chrysanthemums were handed out among the protesters. Standing, with the flowers held aloft, an enormous collective floral arrangement was drawn. The Koreans began to give their straw hats to their protectors. More hugs. With drums and music the protest band turned the mood into a party.

Ideology?

While the multitude returned to Kilometer Zero, some people were looking for confrontations with the police. The moment of greatest jubilation became one of greatest risk. Someone repeatedly sloshed a pale with 20 kilos of shit towards the police who now stood in the breach of the broken barricade. Those in uniform advanced. Panic took over some of the protesters.

There began a conflict between the youth who called on everyone to return to Kilometer Zero and those who wanted a confrontation with the police. Decomposed, some militants from a local Cancun group began to accuse everyone else of being "sell outs" and for having negotiated away the movement. "They distracted us." One of the youth responded: "If you want to screw your m____, go ahead once the people have left." Without much tact, his adversary responded: "we prefer to die, but not alone."

The accusations came down in a cascade: the worse of all was repeated with insistence: petit bourgeois. "You have a future. You are defending the police. The indigenous and the farmers are not here," said those who wanted to confront the public forces. In response, there was no lack of statements that those making such severe criticisms were connected to the governor of

Quintana Roo, member of the PRI, and that they were trying to create problems for the mayor of Cancun, a militant of the Green Party.

Little by little, the protesters returned to the encampment of the Koreans. One of the remains on the barricade was the charred ashes of the effigies representing the WTO. On one of them the head had survived, looking like a horror film from Hollywood.