

# The Iraq War protests: An event of world historical significance

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The mass demonstrations that unfolded simultaneously across the globe on the weekend of February 15-16, 2003 will live in history. What occurred on these days was an unprecedented manifestation of international human solidarity against war. In the face of the militaristic frenzy of the most ruthless imperialist regime in the world, more than 10,000,000 people have spoken out against the plans for an invasion of Iraq.

These demonstrations represent a turning point in world politics. From North and South America, through Europe and Asia to Australia and Africa, the mass and largely spontaneous popular mobilizations of February 15-16 have exposed the deep and unbridgeable political, social and moral chasm that separates the ruling elites and their media propagandists from the people.

In the aftermath of these powerful demonstrations, all pretence of democratic political legitimacy for the war policies of the Bush administration in the United States and the Blair regime in Britain has been irrevocably shattered. The demonstration of more than one million people in London and Glasgow was a stunning repudiation of Blair's attempt to revive, through an alliance with Washington, the colonialist aspirations of British imperialism.

The marches held in cities all across the United States were, if anything, even more remarkable. There, in the very center of world imperialism, the mass demonstrations have shown that the American people are repulsed by the war frenzy of the Bush administration and the militaristic propaganda of the establishment media.

Nor should one fail to appreciate the significance of the massive outpouring of humanity in Barcelona, Rome, Paris and Berlin. In these great cities, the bitter

experience of fascist barbarism—represented by the regimes of Franco, Mussolini, Pétain and Hitler—lives in the consciousness of the populace. The working people of Spain, Italy, France and Germany instinctively grasp the reactionary menace posed by the war-mongering of the Bush administration.

The demonstrations of February 15-16 were, in the first instance, an expression of massive popular opposition to an invasion of Iraq. But the historical significance of the events of this past weekend transcends even this immensely important issue.

What we have witnessed and participated in over the past two days is the birth of a new *international* social movement of opposition to imperialism. Underlying this development are profound objective processes. The global integration of capitalist production, spearheaded by transnational corporations, has laid the foundation for the global coordination of social struggles of the working class.

Just as the unparalleled development of world economy transcends the barriers of the national state, the class struggle as an objective historical process tends naturally to sweep across national borders. With ever-greater consciousness, the working class will define itself in international rather than national terms. It is precisely this tendency that found expression on Saturday, when 3,000 Jewish and Arab workers marched together against war in the streets of Tel Aviv.

It would be a mistake to believe that demonstrations by themselves, even those as large and as global as the mobilizations of Saturday and Sunday, can prevent imperialist war. However, it is necessary to understand that the events of this historic weekend mark the initial entry into political struggle of new, immensely progressive and potentially revolutionary forces.

Now, the responsibility posed by the great

international manifestation of opposition to imperialist war is to encourage the development of the political class consciousness of this new movement, and help it to understand the essential link between the struggle against imperialist war and the fight for international socialism.

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