Reports on March 5 student protests

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The WSWS is continuing to publish reports on the student antiwar demonstrations held March 5 in the US and internationally. The protests involved students at hundreds of campuses and high schools across the US and in countries such as Canada, Australia, Britain, Spain and France. The day of action included high school walkouts, sit-ins, teach-ins and rallies. The protests won widespread support despite freezing cold temperatures in many parts of the US and threats of suspension or expulsion from some high school administrators.

Supporters of the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party distributed a statement entitled "The fight against war: an open letter to students from the World Socialist Web Site"] *at a number of the protests. The statement is available as a PDF file. We urge our readers to* download the statement *and distribute it at their campuses and high schools. We also encourage readers to submit reports on activities at their high schools and universities to* editor@wsws.org. *Below we post reports from solidarity demonstrations in Spain and from Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana.*

Spanish students demand general strike against war on Iraq

Tens of thousands of university and secondary college students took strike action in Spain on March 5 to protest against the planned US-led war on Iraq. Reports indicate that the strike was supported by 95 percent of college students and 80 percent of university students across the country.

The strike and demonstrations were timed to coincide with international action by students around the world and particularly those instigated by the Coalition of Youth and Students for Peace in the United States.

Demonstrations were staged in over 50 cities and towns in total to protest against the warmongering policies of José María Aznar's Peoples Party (PP) government. The biggest demonstrations were in Madrid and Barcelona—30,000 and 10,000 respectively. Thousands of students also demonstrated in Tarragona, Gerona, Valencia and Palma de Mallorca.

The Madrid demonstration was called by the Students Union (SE) under the motto: "Not a euro, not a soldier, not a bullet for this war". It finished in Puerta del Sol, the square that has seen demonstrations by millions recently—on February 15 in the mass international protests against war in Iraq and on February 22 to protest the government's mismanagement of the oil spill in Galicia.

The Barcelona demonstration called on the trade unions to organize a one-day general strike of workers against war. The main banner read: "No to imperialist war—let's carry out a general strike of workers and students". Students called for Aznar to resign, denouncing him as a "fascist" and "Bush's lackey". The general secretary of the students union, Aniol Santos, reading a manifesto at the end of the march said: "It is possible to stop the war through the permanent unity of workers and students".

For three consecutive weekends the right-wing government of Spain has faced millions on the streets protesting the government's bellicose stance abroad and anti-working class policies at home. Poll after poll has shown some 90 percent of the population opposed to war under any circumstances.

Opposition parties have been forced into speaking out against the war by the oppositional mood of the masses, forcing a bitter debate in parliament. The Congress is receiving scores of motions from city councils rejecting a military intervention and asking for a diplomatic solution. Divisions within the ruling party are compounding the government's crisis. Four delegates have resigned and many PP councilors have been signing antiwar motions.

Notre Dame students rally

An estimated 200-300 students gathered in O'Shaugnessy Hall of Notre Dame University in South

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Bend, Indiana on March 5 to participate in the “Books not Bombs” international protest. Students made a large banner out of a white bed sheet, with block letters reading “No War in Iraq,” which accumulated innumerable signatures from passersby. Students read poems and essays, and then some of the professors spoke with students about strategies and issues in opposing war.

Some of the university clergy, which had illegally visited Iraq in December, spoke with students about the social realities facing the Iraqi people, and the true suffering a war there would cause. Though some students objected strongly to religious moralizing about the impending war, the courage of the churchmen was applauded by all.

Students distributed simple flyers listing the facts about the Iraq situation, and I helped plan and distribute these. I also brought along 20 copies of the WSWS statement, “The fight against war: an open letter to students from the *World Socialist Web Site*.” I met many other self-described Trotskyists and readers of the WSWS at the protest, and my supply of copies was so quickly exhausted that I had to make several trips back to the copying machine to make more. Several students expressed strong interest in attending the March 29-30 events in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The tone of the protest was very serious, as students and passersby were forced to seriously consider their country’s course of action. Some 1,000 students and faculty signed a petition opposing the war, which appeared in the school newspaper.

Students participating in the protest, at around dusk, met again and began a candlelight procession across the campus. The procession began at the flagpole, proceeded past most of the dormitories and classrooms, past the cafeteria, past the church and the offices of the clergy, and ended at the Grotto, a place of strong spiritual significance for many of the religious students. We left our candles there, and our candles are still burning.

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