

Antiwar protests in Copenhagen and Rotterdam

Our reporters
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Copenhagen

More than 2,000 people took to the streets of Copenhagen on Saturday to protest against the war in Iraq. The demonstration started in front of the American embassy and marched through the inner city to the Danish parliament at Christiansborg where a rally was held.

The protest was not only directed against the US-led invasion and seizure of Iraq but also against the Danish government under Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, which forms part of the so-called “coalition of the willing.” The right-wing Rasmussen government deployed troops to the Persian Gulf in support of the military invasion and has appointed Danish veteran diplomat Hendrik Olesen as an administrative director for the coming administration in Baghdad to be led by retired US General Jay Garner.

Participants in the march came from all age groups, and different social and national backgrounds, but a large part of the protest was made up by young people and immigrants. While various left and radical organisations were present, a great majority of those who attended the demonstration did not show affiliation to these groups.

The rally had been organised by *Ingen krig mod Irak*, an antiwar umbrella organisation that consists of a wide range of groups, parties, initiatives and individuals. Speakers on the platform included Hanne Reintoft, a former member and MP of the Socialist Party, author and playwright Stig Dalager, Anneliese Ebbe for *Ingen krig mod Irak* and Tor Aage Eikerapen, who spoke for the antiwar network in Norway.

Speakers on the platform promoted the notion that the antiwar protests around the world should be aimed at pressuring respective national governments into taking an oppositional stance towards the US war drive.

Speaking to reporters from the WSWs, Tor Aage Eikerapen said: “I hope that Europe will increasingly distance itself from the US, but I’m afraid that most of the European governments will now work to restore normal relations.”

In opposition to such an orientation towards national governments and the bourgeois state, supporters of the *World Socialist Web Site* distributed hundreds of leaflets advancing a revolutionary perspective based on the independent mobilisation and the unification of the international working class. Participants generally showed great interest in the WSWs statement “Political lessons of the war in Iraq” and many held discussions with the distributors. A number were already familiar with the WSWs.

Many of the demonstrators spoken to the WSWs team expressed regret that this protest did not attract as many people as on February 15, when some 30,000 marched in Copenhagen. They pointed to the role of the mass media, which unanimously reported on the war from the viewpoint of the US-led “coalition of the willing,” thereby garnering support for the invasion.

Participants stressed that—contrary to the picture painted by the media—the war in Iraq is not over. They drew a comparison to the war in Afghanistan, which still continues to take its death toll but is no longer covered by the mass media.

“I fear Iraq might become a second Palestine, a land in constant war,” said 19-year-old Maj, who works as a kindergarten teacher. “And even if ‘peace’ is established, it would be just on the surface. The whole political development puts world peace seriously in danger.”

Stinus, a 16-year-old student, stated: “The war is not over and the US won’t bring democracy to Iraq, only a new dictator. Denmark has joined America in the war

because they are expecting huge profits and economic advantages from the rebuilding of Iraq.”

“What we are experiencing now is a very fundamental structural breakdown in world history,” said Rolf, 58, a university teacher. “One expression of this development is that the US no longer consider themselves bound to international institutions like the United Nations. This is the end of the world order that came out of the Second World War.”

Rotterdam

Several hundred people took part in the demonstration Saturday in the Dutch city of Rotterdam against the Bush/Blair war vs. Iraq. The march moved from Schouwburgplein (in front of the city’s main theatre) and proceeded for one and a half hours through the town centre.

The city on the river Maas is famous for the largest sea harbour worldwide, but in the past few years Rotterdam became notorious as a centre for the rise of the right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn. At local elections in March last year Fortuyn and his list “Leefbaar Rotterdam” (“Liveable Rotterdam”) were able to direct widespread political opposition and discontent into racist channels.

Nearly half of the inhabitants of Rotterdam are immigrants or their descendants, from former Dutch colonies. In some of the poor quarters of the city the percentage is even higher. In Feyenoord, for example, 77 percent of the population are immigrants.

The demonstration last Saturday reflected the international mix of the city. Many immigrant communities from the Near and Middle East—Iraqis, Iranians, Turks, Kurds, Palestinians—protested against the US-led war in Iraq. The dominant theme of the demonstration and rally was the lies and propaganda by the governments in Washington, London and Den Haag. The transitional Dutch government led by the Christian Democrat Jan-Pieter Balkenende supports the war. The Social Democrats of the PvdA voiced some opposition against the war during the election campaign, but have virtually dropped all criticism in recent weeks.

Nevertheless, just last week the months-long negotiations collapsed between the Christian Democrats of the CDA and the Social Democrats of the PvdA on forming a coalition government, despite broad agreement on the necessity of a programme of massive

social cuts. The breakdown of talks means that the Netherlands has been without an elected government since the beginning of this year.

The speakers on the platform of the rally and the banners and placards of the participants mainly challenged official propaganda that the war against Iraq was aimed at bringing freedom and peace to the Iraqi people.

Ary from Leiden is a regular reader of the WSWS. He told us: “The media report that the war is already over. But for the Iraqi people the war is not over. If an American soldier thinks you are walking too quickly, you can be shot. Houses and living quarters are still bombed from the air. It was not so easy for the Russians in Chechnya after the invasion of the Russian army. The American military has to withdraw from Iraq.”

Ary reported that a train with military transports for the war was stopped by opponents of the war near Venlo and could not drive on. “The train had to return to Germany,” he said. “The antiwar groups in Holland should be informed when such trains depart in Germany, then they can try to stop them. Also, the use of the US military bases in Germany must be stopped.”

Regarding the attitude of the government in the Netherlands he explained: “Officially there is no military support. But the US Secretary of the State Powell asked for the deployment of 600 soldiers from the Netherlands to Iraq. At the moment it is still unclear what the reaction of the government here will be. The coalition negotiations failed this week.

“The war against Iraq must have played a role. During a recent opinion poll, 18 percent of the population supported the Socialist Party and 17 percent the Groenlinks because they oppose the war. These parties are officially against the war, but during the elections in January they only got 5 percent of the vote.”



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