

Spain: Thousands demonstrate against Iraq occupation

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As part of the international mobilisations against the occupation of Iraq by US-led military forces, Spanish people took to the streets once more in large numbers on Sunday, September 27.

The Spanish protests coincided with demonstrations across Europe and internationally in opposition to the illegal US-led military attack on Iraq, and the subsequent occupation of the country.

In Spain, the biggest demonstration was held in Barcelona, where up to 25,000 people marched under banners proclaiming, "Occupation troops out of Iraq and Palestine" and "No to war." The large number of participants caught the protest organisers, the Aturem la Guerra (Stop the War) coalition, by surprise as heavy rain had been expected to ensure a far smaller turnout.

One of the most popular slogans was: "Bush, Blair, Aznar, to the Hague Tribunal" (i.e., to be tried for war crimes). Spain's right-wing government, led by Popular Party leader Jose Aznar, has been one of the Bush administration's staunchest allies, despite opposition to the war by some 90 percent of the Spanish population. Spanish troops have been dispatched to Iraq to join in US and British efforts to suppress popular opposition to the occupation.

A spokeswoman for Aturem told the rally in Barcelona that the war was an invasion and a massacre that have brought only destruction and suffering to the people of Iraq. She said that as of the present time no weapons of mass destruction had been found and no link between Saddam Hussein and international terrorism had been proven. She added that democracy had not been brought to Iraq and that people did not live in a safer and more peaceful world since the invasion.

A number of cultural figures took part in the Barcelona demonstration, with actress Imma Colomer

declaring at the end of the protest: "We are revving up the engines in order to become a million again, like in the spring."

The second largest march was in Madrid, where over 10,000 people took part. Again, many artists participated in the demonstration, marching at its head. At the concluding rally, David Couso, brother of José Couso, the Spanish cameraman killed by deliberate US fire on the Palestine Hotel during the war, read a communiqué condemning the war.

Neither the leader of the Socialist Party nor the trade unions made appearances at the demonstration. Instead, Gaspar Llamazares, head of the Communist Party-led coalition, the United Left, was the main political speaker. In his remarks, Llamazares called for the withdrawal of Spanish troops, whose lives were being endangered by the occupation.

Smaller but sizeable demonstrations took place in a dozen other cities, including Seville, Malaga, Santander, Alicante and Mallorca. The demonstration in Mallorca was organised by the "Coalition for Democracy and Social Globalisation" and called for an end to the "military occupation of Iraq, Palestine and Western Sahara."



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