

Spain: Tens of thousands march against Iraq occupation

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Large demonstrations were held in Spain on Sunday, February 15, to commemorate the anniversary of the millions-strong anti-war marches that occurred all over the world a year before. Spaniards were overwhelmingly opposed to the launching of the war against Iraq last year and staged some of the largest demonstrations in Europe, particularly in Barcelona with one-and-a-half million participating and Madrid with more than 1 million.

By far, the largest anniversary demonstration was held in the capital Madrid. According to the organisers, around 150,000 people converged in the centre of town and marched demanding the withdrawal of the Spanish troops from Iraq and the end of the occupation of that country. They also demanded that Prime Minister José María Aznar give the real reasons why Spain participated in an “illegal and immoral” war.

The demonstration was organised by the Madrid Social Forum under the slogan “A year later... Madrid against the war.” Present were relatives and friends of José Couso, the 37-year-old cameraman working for the Spanish television network Telecinco, who was killed on April 8, the day before Baghdad fell, when American tanks shelled the Palestine Hotel in an unprovoked attack. (See: “Death of Spanish journalists in Iraq sparks protests”.)

As well as all the political parties, with the exception of the ruling Partido Popular (PP), about 40 organisations representing cooperatives, neighbourhoods, trade unionists, ecologists, pacifists and those connected with cinema and culture swelled the march.

The writer Rosa Regás and the actor Juan Diego Botto read a manifesto against the presence of international troops in Iraq and in favour of “sovereignty and self-determination for the people of

Iraq.”

“With all the oil that they possess, the Iraqi people can rebuild themselves,” Regás added.

The manifesto stated that US president George W. Bush, British prime minister Tony Blair and Aznar had “consciously lied” when they accused Saddam Hussein of storing weapons of mass destruction, while their real objectives were to “appropriate Iraqi oil” and install a “colonial model” in Iraq. It further defended the legitimate right of the people of Iraq to resist and mobilise in the face of an occupation that is illegal.”

The demonstrations in Catalonia were decentralised and organised on a city-by-city basis. More than 10,000 marched in Barcelona, and many tens of thousands more in over 30 cities and towns around the province.

A spokeswoman from *Aturem la Guerra* (Stop the War) said that although international mobilisations had been decided on by the Global Social Forum of Bombay for March 20—the anniversary of the actual beginning of the bombing of Iraq—“we could not ignore this other anniversary, one of a mass reaction against a war every reason for which has collapsed one by one and been translated into lies: no weapons of mass destruction, no links with terrorism, no freedom for the Iraqi people who a year later are even more insecure.”

Big demonstrations took also place in Valencia, Seville and many more Spanish cities, including rallies in front of US embassies and consulates.

At the end of the Barcelona demonstration, the organisers gave details of the legal charges they are preparing for presentation to the International Criminal Tribunal (ICT) in The Hague. *Aturem la Guerra* is demanding that the ICT open a legal process against Aznar and Blair for crimes of aggression.



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