

Hundreds of thousands march in Spain

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Between 300,000 and 400,000 people demonstrated in cities throughout Spain against the US occupation of Iraq. Despite the fact that the protests received little advance publicity, at least 100,000 took to the streets in Madrid, scene of last week's train bombings that killed 202 people. The biggest demonstration, involving between 150,000 and 200,000 people, took place in Barcelona. Some 15,000 marched in Zaragoza, 10,000 in Seville, and thousands more in Valencia, Castille, Palma de Mallorca and other cities and towns.

The thousands of people of all ages who massed along the route from Plaza Neptuno to Puerta del Sol in Madrid made constant references to the terrorist outrage of March 11 and the ensuing cover-up by the Popular Party government, which had insisted right up to the March 14 election that the Basque separatist group ETA was responsible for the attack, even as widely reported evidence increasingly suggested that the perpetrators were Al Qaeda sympathisers.

The main chants were "Que Felicidad, España sin Aznar" [What happiness, Spain without Aznar], "Aznar Canalla, nos vemos en La Haya" [Aznar, criminal, we'll see you in the Hague], "One down [Aznar], Two to go [Bush & Blair]", "No a la Guerra" [No to war].

Pride of place was reserved to the contingent of journalists, photographers and relatives of José Couso, the photographer shot down by American troops during the invasion as he photographed the bombing of the headquarters of the Arab TV station Al Jazeera. As the banner carrying a huge photograph of the journalist next to a caption "Murdered by US military on 8 April 2003" approached the Puerta del Sol, the crowd broke into loud applause.

The demonstration ended in front of the Madrid Town Hall, whose walls were plastered with anti-government slogans, placards, messages, photos of the dead in the Atocha bombings and lit red candles. The slogans strewn over the pavement read, "Your war, our

Dead," "War and poverty =Terrorism," "Government of liars," "King dumb," "Monarchy useless (or even worse)," "Your arms—our dead, your business—our misery."

The *World Socialist Web Site* team received a very friendly reception to the leaflet it distributed with the statement, "One year since the US invasion of Iraq," and to a discussion of the political issues confronting the Spanish working class at this crucial point in its history. Interviews turned into animated discussions, as our reporters asked participants their opinions concerning the recent political developments in Spain and their international implications. People hoped the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) would do better than the PP. But they saw the incoming Zapatero government more as a lesser evil than a real alternative.

Many young people, who had voted for the first time last week in a general election that brought down the right-wing government of José María Aznar, took part in the demonstration. Many expressed pride at having taken part in an event that had influenced international relations. Asked what they would do if the PSOE and its prime minister-elect did not carry out the few reforms they have promised, including the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq, they said they would immediately go back into the streets.



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