
Another Globalisation IS possible

With the prospects of 'revolution' receding during the nineties, efforts towards various forms of solidarity and collective struggles received a serious setback.

The turn of the century, however, saw a resurgence at Seattle, and subsequently at various other meetings of international neo-con(servative) institutions like the World Bank and WTO, and at other gatherings like the World Economic Forum.

There has also been an impressive response in support of the World Social Forum processes that attempt to broadbase the opposition to the type of globalisation represented by 'neo-liberalism and domination of the world by capital'.

And recently the imperialist actions of the US in Iraq drew widespread protests on an unprecedented scale.

These protests have kindled a new hope among those who have 'kept the faith'.

Is this for real? Is there a real convergence?

Or are we seeing too much into these surges and waves of protest and affirmation?

Anti-War Upsurge

By Aijaz Ahmed

Millions of people poured into the streets of the world in protest against the United States' aggressive moves against Iraq, marking the convergence of the global movements against corporate globalisation and imperialist war. Close to a million people marched in Rome on February 15 to protest against their government's collusion with the United States on the question of the imperial blitzkrieg against Iraq; over a million marched in London on the same day, in the largest public demonstration in British history. In between, 90,000 protesters had gathered in Glasgow outside the hall where Blair was addressing a Labour Party conference. Meanwhile, a poll showed that 51 per cent of Britons considered him "Bush's poodle" and a staggering 90 per cent disapproved of his will to make war on Iraq.

Forty-one American Nobel laureates in science and economics issued a declaration on January 27 opposing a preventive war against Iraq without wide international support. These are, by no means, people who would otherwise be identified with a peace movement. Among them are Hans A. Bethe, an architect of the atom bomb; Walter Kohn, a former adviser to the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency at the Pentagon; Norman F. Ramsey, a Manhattan Project scientist who readied the Hiroshima bomb and later advised the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and others of their kind.

This outpouring of humanity against an imperial war, which has not even begun, on the scale at which it is being planned, is of course deeply connected with the anti-globalisation movements, which have also become global in scale over the years, doing their work in a thousand locales across continents and periodically holding the various Social Forums which then culminate in the World Social Forum. Indeed, it was at the time of the European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence, Italy, that the first of the really vast anti-war rallies had taken place; 40,000 attended the ESF but ten times that many marched against the war. This convergence of movements against

corporate globalisation with movements opposed to imperialist war may well prove to be the forerunner of an authentic anti-imperialist movement of the 21st century. A notable feature of these anti-war mobilisations, as in the anti-globalisation movement, is that these consist overwhelmingly of young people, or of older people who have never marched before in their lives. The other equally important feature is the sheer breadth of the anti-war sentiment. What may prove decisive in building a truly anti-imperialist movement is the massive unrest and dissidence within the working class.

... the protesting multitude of 15 million people who poured into the streets of the world in something of a global chain really was vast and unprecedented. It began in Auckland, on the southeastern tip of the empire and gave to New Zealand easily the largest anti-war demonstration in its history. Next was Melbourne with 200,000 in the streets, and the centre of gravity in this human wave kept shifting as the sun itself moved westward. The epicentre was in Western Europe, especially the three countries of 'Old Europe' – the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain – whose governments are identified with the U.S.; Barcelona had seen nothing like this since the fall of General Francisco Franco three decades ago. Fifteen thousand in Paris and close to half a million in Berlin were a fraction of what the multitudes would have been if their governments had not broken with Washington.

North America was in the next time zone and 400,000 gathered in New York even though the city government, backed by an extraordinary ruling by a Judge, had banned a march. This was synchronised with protest marches in roughly 300 small and medium-sized towns across the U.S. A hundred thousand people came out in Montreal and 80,000 in Toronto, in the largest peace demonstrations in the history of the two cities. What had begun in Auckland ended 48 hours later in neighbouring Australia, with a quarter million marching in Sydney. The sun had gone full circle, and it was dawn of another day. War against the planet had brought forth the first planetary rebellion against it.

This remarkable shift in the U.S. towards a fairly generalised anti-war sentiment in labour unions, city councils and the populace at large - not just in the larger and more cosmopolitan cities but deep into what Americans call 'middle America' - is taking place in the context of great scepticism among intellectuals, opinion makers and professionals of various kinds. ▶

Using the very tools and processes of communication and media management of the current dominant form of globalisation, these surges of dissent and of affirmation for the need of a different world, signify a turning point.

Are we developing newer forms of international processes and institutions? Are these appropriate for what we want to achieve?

There is something else that we in India need to look at.

The 'occidental developmental world-view' is lurking within us. How easily we consider the rallies and protests that took place only in the developed world to have taken place the 'world over'!

When these protests took place, India was quiet. There was the tired flailing of fists, and the odd hoarse shouting, most of it from the usual suspects- the organised, conventional left. Is it that we felt that anyway most of our country people felt as we did, the war was and is wrong? Will that explain that just a few of the converted, again mostly the conventional left, rallied in India at the time of all those protests and rallies of the last few years?

We were well represented at those events abroad, but where was the country-wide upsurge in support of our people there?

The upsurge that Aijaz talks about is confined to the West, and to some extent to Latin America.

There's a lot of ground to cover before Another Globalisation is Possible!

