

# Next stop Florence

So you protested in Prague, bussed it to Barcelona and got gassed in Genoa? Now get yourself to Florence, for the world's biggest ever meeting of anti-capitalists, pacifists and greens this November. **resist** asked a handful of our members why they are travelling to the European Social Forum

"I am going so I can add my voice to the thousands of others who reject the notion that war on Iraq is inevitable. I firmly believe this war has nothing to do with improving the lot of the Iraqi people or the removal of weapons of mass destruction. After all, the North Koreans have admitted that they are seeking to develop a nuclear bomb and Blair and Bush have not declared that they must be the subject of regime change.

"It is hugely hypocritical of both the UK and the USA to say this when they both hold vast stocks of weapons of mass destruction themselves. On the Saturday of the ESF I will be marching with tens of thousands of others, from all over Europe, on the first European-wide anti-war demonstration, to send a clear message that it is not in our name. I will be at the ESF to say no to American and UK imperialism, that the world should be about people not profit and that above all a better world really is possible."

Simon Wellings

"Isn't it amazing what we've achieved over the past few years? After putting up with Thatcher's "There is No Alternative" for so long, we've now managed to put capitalism onto the defensive. Everyone has their own theory as to why this happened so suddenly. Mine is that various groups (human rights, world development, environmentalists and so) realised the theme linking their various campaigns was global capitalism; and that single issue pressure groups made no sense when the various campaigns were difference faces of the same enemy.

"At Genoa it was wonderful to see everyone from Class War to Christian Aid together. But go back to Southampton and this is not repeated. You still have Amnesty International, WDM, Greenpeace, the Socialist Workers Party and so on aware they are on the same side, but acting as part of their own organisation. This is where the ESF is so important. It will be another Genoa, in that all "the movement" is behind it; and I'm hopeful this will lead to people thinking of themselves more as part of the the movement.

"No organisation will enable people to fight on every front. But if people put their efforts into building the movement then another world is possible."

Chris Blake



Hannah and Chris

"A flame lit inside me after I protested in Nice in 2000 and in Genoa last year. Since coming back I've gone to more demonstrations and meetings than I've had hot dinners, although I'm afraid to say the flame has flickered a bit. There seem to be a lot of issues we never talk about. For instance, while we rightly march against racist murders, we never seem to make a fuss about the two women a week in Britain who are murdered by their partners or ex-partners, or the countless women and girls who are raped and beaten up every day. Maybe the ESF will get me back into things. I'm really looking forward to the big anti-war demo too."

Hannah Bayman

"I'm going to Florence because I want to protest against greed, war and the global capitalist system. The immediate priority for the movement is opposition to the war. But we must concentrate on broader issues of social justice, immigration and wealth redistribution. The ESF is an excellent platform for different parts of the movement to work together as a united front. We must act together on issues that unite us. The movement is very similar throughout Europe. Different countries are experiencing different levels of struggle; but the overall picture is one of convergence."

Dave Fagan

**"**Nothing like the ESF has ever happened in Europe before, and I want to be in this at the start. It will be really interesting to see different elements of the anti-capitalist movement within the UK; and even more interesting to see different elements of the anti-capitalist movement within Europe. The anti-capitalist movement does differ across Europe. The age profile is different and the issues people focus on are different.

"Personally I think the priority for the movement for the next few years should be General Agreement on Trade and Services

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(GATS) and the EU. GATS has lost its profile recently but it is important we realise it hasn't gone away.

"It is equally important for us to recognise that the EU is not a benevolent institution but an instrument of global capitalism. At the ESF I would like to stand up against a Europe of capital and war."

**Anna Hoyles**



**"**I am an environmental campaigner first and foremost — so why go to the ESF? The publicity says it is for everyone who is against neo-liberalism and war, who cares about the future of our planet and who believes a better world is possible. Well, that's me I guess. Ideally that should cover pretty much everyone; in reality it does cover millions of people who campaign against capitalism, environmental destruction and war-mongering simpletons shoe-horned into the White House by hawkish has-been parents still wishing they'd surfed into Baghdad on the back of a cruise missile.

"Millions want to change the world and are part of a growing movement working for a future where people and planet come before power and profit. This is a movement I want to be part of, and these are the people I want to work with to help shape such a future. After all, where else can you meet such a huge number of like-minded but diverse people to organise campaigns, share experiences and discuss alternatives? Nowhere else that I know of."

**Dave Hubble**

**"**Why has someone who currently lives in Washington and spent virtually all her life in America going to the ESF? Well, after some critical political discussions with international activists, I feel very strongly that the anti-capitalist movement needs to focus on building stronger global networks. This is a key reason for my attendance at the European Social Forum. Personally, I am strongly inspired by activity, movement, and struggle outside of the United States, especially in Europe. This inspiration became all the more important after the US movement dipped post-September 11.

"As capitalism is a systemic borderless evil, the fight to combat it must be a global effort. Strategically speaking as well, it is wise to study the approaches of those from different cultures and political and social systems in order to strengthen our own national and local struggles. My goals for attending the ESF are to gain inspiration, acquire knowledge and skills, and increase net working opportunities for US activist organisations."

**Virginia Rodino**



**"**As soon as I heard about the ESF I was very excited. I think this must be the first time something like this has happened. Not only does it give people from all over Europe the chance to debate the issues without dodging police, it also shows we have taken the initiative. We are not reacting to someone else's meeting as we were at Genoa or Porto Allegre, we have taken the initiative ourselves. This is our movement and this is our future. The movement needs to be very broad. We have forced capitalism onto the defensive and more and more people are coming to our side, but we need still more. This means a broad, plural, movement in a necessity. People have different perspectives, but we all know what we all want and what we all don't want. People should work together when they can I agree. I am an optimist, I think we can agree on a lot.

**Amanda Dubeck**