

## PROEM

The *mercado* (marketplace) of Porto Alegre takes on a new *avatar* (incarnation) and becomes the *mandi* or *haat* (marketplace) of Mumbai.

After being held in Porto Alegre for three years, the WSF moves to Mumbai — the country's outward looking commercial face, its largest city, which sprawls across seven islands, joined into an artificial isthmus.

Mumbai's challenges are only matched by its enormous drive — which makes it unique. A city of almost 14 million, the home of Dalal Street, India's stock exchange; headquarters of many national and international companies, a major industrial centre, and home of many social movements and struggles. It houses Dharavi, Asia's largest workers settlement, where the self-activity of residents are an example to counterparts all over the world. And, as the film capital of India, the city is the largest weaver of dreams.

At WSF 2 the proposal that the next Forum be held outside Brazil represented the feeling that the WSF needed to reach out in a larger way to the African-Asian region, where two-thirds of the world's population live. The Asian Social Forum held in the Indian city of Hyderabad, in January 2003 demonstrated India's commitment to being host to WSF 4.

From January 16–21, 2004 between 75,000 to 100,000 participants are expected to attend WSF 4. While most of these will be from South Asia and the Asian region, it is expected that other regions will participate actively as well. Some pressing issues :

- The WSF Charter explicitly states that party representatives shall not participate in the Forum. Some party activists and representatives of radical organisations in India say that the outcome of the WSF's academic exercise is to divert the anti-imperialistic struggles of working class people away from the badly needed socialist political alternative. Is this true ?
- Does the neoliberal agencies' new found affinity to civil society arise directly from their reluctance to recognise the existence of class society and class struggle ? Have NGOs and civil society become the stooges of the World Bank and USAID (and other agencies), and helping them to further their agenda of globalisation ? Do the funds of development co-operation agencies and private foundations coming into India for development, work against the spirit of struggle, and are they co-opting work for real and sustainable change ?
- How do the struggles of women in the informal sector, Dalits, tribals and insurgent movements get reflected in the WSF ? How will India's rich history of struggle — against colonialism, elitism, feudalism, poverty and inequity — be reflected at WSF 4 ?
- How will the WSF deal with the power of the state ?

India's hosting the Forum in 2004 comes at a time when the fallout of the current phase of globalisation is being felt. In 1991, the Government of India opened the economy after years of protectionism. Rising middle class aspirations, greater awareness of rights and responsibilities, and more citizen participation— all make it an exciting time for a discussion on change.

Is Another India Possible ?

SECTION 4

gLoBaLising the FORum : The FORum  
in india