

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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CU rallies becoming more militant

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The differences between the two major anti-war rallies held on the Columbia campus since war broke out in the Persian Gulf last week exemplify how the peace movement has changed in that time.

The most apparent difference is the turnout at the rallies. Over 2,000 people gathered for the Jan. 15 rally,

while only 400 participated in the rally held yesterday on Low steps.

One of the rally's organizers, Liana Scalettar, CC '93, attributed much of the decrease to Monday's poor weather. Other factors, however, should have overcome this obstacle.

First, far more people were available to attend yesterday's rally than were the Jan. 15 rally. Columbia classes had not yet begun on Jan. 15, and, as a result, fewer people were on campus. Also, other New York campuses were not as involved in the earlier rally.

Conversely, yesterday's rally had the entire University population to attract. Also, it drew students from other area colleges and some high schools. Organizers travelled the city with posters advertising

yesterday's rally, and, in one sense, the publicity was very successful. Representatives from Eugene Lang College, Cooper Union, The Tisch School of the Arts, and New York University were present, as well as several high school students. The extent of publicity should have generated enough of a turnout to overcome the weather.

Secondly, the commencement of the war Jan. 16 gave anti-war forces something tangible to protest. The urgency of trying to stop a war with impact on American lives, rather than trying to prevent a war not yet realized in action, should have stirred enough emotion to draw more than 400 people to the Low steps yesterday.

The start of classes may have made people more apathetic and less concerned about the war, but since there were no classes yesterday and no exams or papers this early in the semester, apathy is probably not the only reason behind the smaller crowds.

At the Jan. 15 rally, speakers offered many different solutions to the Gulf crisis. Opinions ranged from wanting to give sanctions more time to calling for a complete noninterventionist stance, defending Saddam Hussein's anti-Americanism as legitimate.

At last Thursday's anti-war organizational meeting, where the Barnard-Columbia Anti-War Coalition was formed, there was similar diversity, although there was a noticeably smaller attempt to

include all factions of the anti-war movement. One student at the organizational meeting expressed disapproval with the anti-American feelings displayed at the march on the United Nations, especially in the burning of the American flag. It was clear, however, that the student's opinions were not held by most members of the coalition, and the opinions certainly were not prevalent at yesterday's rally. The rally was predominantly noninterventionist and anti-American, with strong anti-Israeli sentiment as well.

The Palestinian issue has been linked directly to the Gulf War by the anti-war protests. One speaker at yesterday's rally insisted "We must repel the Zionist oppression of the downtrodden Palestinians." Pro-Israeli sentiment became tied to pro-war sentiment, although the connection is not necessarily valid. Jewish campus leaders such as Director of Earl Hall Rabbi Michael Paley and Abby Weinberg, BC '92, a member of the Jewish Coalition for Peace, still spoke against the war after the bombing of Israel.

For years Israel has received castigation from the left for its treatment of the Palestinians. Similarly, America has been chastised for refusing to condemn the treatment. Any

leftist-based movement dealing with the Middle East is bound to include a criticism of Israel.

The Palestinian problem is not the only issue that has been tacked on to the anti-war movement. At yesterday's rally, AIDS, homelessness, racial injustice, Panama, and education were all linked to the Bush administration's Persian Gulf policy. At Friday night's candlelight vigil, one organizer advised protesters not to wear fur on anti-war marches.

This upsurge of relating other issues to the anti-war movement seems to be a process of radicalization. Different groups are brought together by the recognition of common enemies: the government, the Bush administration, the "establishment."

Furthermore, activist groups that do not receive much media exposure, such as those advocating more funding for AIDS research, see the opportunity to align themselves with a movement that receives media attention and thousands of people's support. Issues that have been overshadowed have had the opportunity to receive national press and increase their visibility.

Reporter's Notebook