

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

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Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXV, Number 61, 16 January 1991 — Peace rally draws 2,000 protestors to Low steps  
[ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

## Peace rally draws 2,000 protestors to Low steps

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*Spectator Staff Writers*

About 2,000 people gathered yesterday afternoon on the steps of Low Library to protest U.S. involvement in the Middle East and to hear speakers urge continued resistance to the Bush administration's insistence on military action.

Although rallies in other parts of the country, such as San Francisco and Seattle, resulted in arrests, as did a rally at the United Nations, no one was arrested at the two-hour rally on Low Plaza.

"We at this college are exempt from this war. But we must not hide behind this exemption. We must use this exemption to bring the troops home," Professor of History Eric Foner said.

"We have the responsibility as intellectuals to formulate an altern-

ative policy,” Professor Emeritus of Industrial Engineering Seymour Melman said. “We must refuse to obey and refuse to implement and thereby checkmate the power of arrogant rulers.”

Author and noted feminist Barbara Ehrenreich said the growing peace movement should move off college campuses to the United Nations and Washington, D.C.

Ashly Dawson, co-founder of Students for Peace in the Middle East, said students have the ability to prevent a war.

“We are politics. You are the only coalition that matters,” he said.

Dawson linked this student movement to the Chinese student movement in Tiananmen Square in 1989, saying American students should attempt to paralyze the U.S. government as Chinese students

did.

“We have to draw our own line in the sand and say, ‘George Bush, if you cross this line you will have to face something more threatening than Saddam Hussein, and that is us. The outraged public,’ ” Dawson said.

Author Kurt Vonnegut was pessimistic about the power of a mass intellectual anti-war movement, saying that the opposition to the Vietnam War did very little.

“Can we stop them? I don’t think so,” he said.

Foner, however, disagreed with Vonnegut’s comparison, saying that this movement is far ahead of its counterpart in the Vietnam War.

“We have a far better base to stop this war. Resistance did help to stop the [Vietnam] war. This resistance will stop this war,” he said.

Speakers attacked the Bush administration’s reasons for going to war as being racist and greedy. Speakers said policy makers were unconcerned about human lives and detached from the American public.

“Let us not forget the Senators and Congressmen gambling with the lives of a half a million people,” actor Tim Robbins said. “What do they care? It’s dark blood. It’s the blood of Arabs and African-Americans and Hispanics. This is a racist war,” he added.

“It was not Saddam Hussein that started this war,” Ehrenreich said. “What started this war was the end to the last war. What started this was the idea of a peace dividend. This is a war to defend militarism.”

Foner said the U.S. government has planned to go to war since the beginning of the crisis.

“If war begins it is because the American government has systematically closed all

options for peace. [The American government] had no interest in letting sanctions work.”

Many speakers, including Director of Earl Hall Rabbi Michael Paley and Associate Professor of Anthropology Elaine Combs-Schilling, expressed similar sentiments.

Speakers also said the war would have far-ranging and devastating consequences.

“We have forgotten how tragic and terrible war is,” Rabbi Paley said.

“If we set that region on fire, even enemies of Saddam Hussein will turn against us and each other, and there will never be peace in that region,” Combs-Schilling said.

Adjunct Professor of Law Charles Black said the U.N. and Congress purposely avoided using the word “war” in their resolutions supporting the use of force.

“The word ‘war’ has been carefully avoided because we have recognized that ‘war’ is an ugly word. It’s more than an ugly word, it’s an ugly thing. It’s a thing that should make the word ‘compromise’ a word of blessing, rather than a word of shame,” he said.

Most speakers agreed that the casualties of this war would be great.

“This war will be the end of public health, and education,” Vonnegut said. “This war will be the eventual end of everything. There will never be a way of stopping it.”

“War will bring such ravaging to civilians it will pale the ravaging of Kuwait,” Combs-Schilling said.

Ehrenreich said various domestic issues, such as the poor, AIDS research, and education will be casualties of war with Iraq, but stressed that all people will be hurt by war.

“If we let ourselves be brutalized by involvement, we all become spiritual casualties of

war," she said.

The war with Iraq, according to Foner, will be conducted under military censorship and accuracy in reporting from the Persian Gulf will be nearly non-existent. "The first casualty of war is the truth," Foner said.

Other speakers at the rally included actress Susan Sarandon and actor Eric Bogosian.

Harold Ambler, a third-year student in GSAS, organizer of Students for Peace in the Middle East, which sponsored the rally, said the situation in Kuwait is an important problem which Columbia groups have not adequately recognized.

"We needed to stage a highly visible protest of the impending violence to unify Columbia," Ambler said.

Students for Peace in the Middle East does not have a unified stance on the crisis in the Gulf, except the endorsement of nonviolence, Ambler said.

"Attacking the Iranians is horrible and catastrophic for a variety of reasons," Ambler said.

Yumna Siddiqui, a fourth year student in GSAS, who helped publicize the rally, expressed similar statements.

"We do not have a single, unified position, but we all agree that Bush should not go to war," Siddiqui said.

Students Mobilized Against Saddam Hussein (SMASH) set up a table near the steps of Low Library and walked through the crowd carrying American flags and posters bearing pro-war sentiments.

National Chairman of SMASH, Glen Morgan, CC '93, said he does not think negotiation will stop Saddam Hussein.

"Every moment the speakers speak, Kuwaitis die, and they don't care. Appease-

ment will not work with Hussein," Morgan said.

"Unless a miracle happens, the world will have to take military action against Hussein," he said.

Members of the Barnard-Columbia Coalition of Students Against Intervention in the Middle East were very visible and supportive at the rally.

Vickie Langhor, a first-year student in GSAS, and member of the coalition, said the group has been working since the beginning of September to protest the presence of American forces in the Gulf.

Coalition member Nancy Coffin, a first-year student in GSAS, who spoke at the rally, said she would like to see more people protesting.

"I think it's great that so many people are here," Coffin said. "We need to see even more people show the U.S. government that we will not stand for a war."

The crowd was attentive to the speakers, but skeptical of their speeches.

"I wish people had more of a constructive view of how to approach the situation," Jenny Bower, CC '91, said. "There is lot of symbolism and high talk, but not much of a concrete approach. The issue seems to have been lost, and the speakers are glossing over Saddam Hussein."

Sam Potts, CC '92, said he thinks the government is not telling the whole story behind the conflict.

"I have trouble separating the motivations for war. The problem of Iraq invading Kuwait might be justification for war, but I don't think we have heard the story about the oil. I don't feel too well-informed about the situation by the government," Potts said.



SPECTATOR/PATRICK SCHULTZ

**SLAUGHTERHOUSE LOW:** Author Kurt Vonnegut spoke at yesterday's rally protesting U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf.