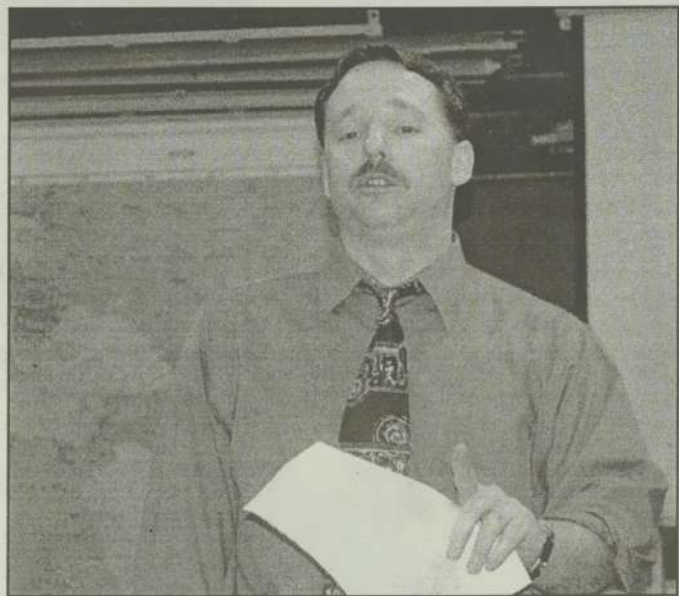


Bombs and bloodshed: the U.S. in Iraq



TONI MCMICHAEL/ Clackamas Print

Dr. Dean Darris, Political Science Instructor, conducted a candid feature on U.S. involvement in Iraq. Darris is a recently tenured Clackamas instructor and a self-proclaimed "Civic missionary preaching a gospel of self-government."

JOEL P. SHERPERT
Feature Editor

"If there's a core element of the unmitigated evil of the Nazi regime, it was the willingness of the German people to allow Hitler. . .to equate love of country with blind obedience," said Political Science Instructor Dean Darris, opening the "Oil Fields and Killing Fields" colloquium on Iraq, held Tuesday, Feb. 16 at 12 p.m. in M206.

"Therefore," he continued, "this discussion is dedicated to all those who gave their lives to refute just such a definition."

The hour-long event covered both history and analysis of the contemporary Iraqi situation, as Darris underscored to an audience of 40-50 students and instructors, packed into the classroom so tightly that they spilled out into the hall, the gravity of U.S. involvement in the Middle East, and the importance of being informed.

Utilizing his own extensive knowledge, a lengthy illustrated handout, source material on overhead projector transparencies, and testimony from U.S. combat veterans who happen also to be Clackamas students, Darris was thorough and gripping in driving his points home.

History of Bloodshed

The extensive program began with a brief history of Iraq, from its establishment as a nation-state by Britain in 1921, to the rise of Saddam Hussein in 1968.

Covering a multitude of material as quickly as possible, Darris proceeded to delineate the history of U.S. involvement with Iraq. He covered our alliance and weapon sales to Iran from 1960-73, the 1979 revolution which made Iran our enemy, our subsequent alliance and weapon sales to Iraq, and 1980-1988's bloody Iran-Iraq war, in which Iran was defeated, but Iraq was bled dry as well.

"There are two ingredients in war:

money and blood," Darris said. He explained that while Iraq had plenty of the latter, they were short on the former, and thus had to take out massive war loans from the small, rich country of Kuwait.

In the meantime, Kuwait was overpumping from the Ramaila oil reserve the two countries shared. This angered Iraq, who had already coveted Kuwaiti land.

The last straw for Iraq came when Kuwait, at the United States' urging, demanded immediate payment on their war loans. The financially drained Iraq contacted the U.S., asking what our position was on "border disputes." U.S. Ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie essentially gave a green light for invasion: "We have no position on border disputes."

In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait.

Dissecting a Dystopia

Darris pointed out that during the Iran-Iraq War, the U.S. supported Saddam, selling Iraq \$1.5 billion in weapons between 1984-90, including biological, chemical, and nuclear, and vouched for Saddam to international import-export banks.

It was odd, then, continued Darris, that following the invasion of Kuwait Saddam was painted as a villain to the American public. He backed this up with NSC Middle East Section Chief Geoffrey Kemp's statement that "We really weren't naïve. We knew he was an S.O.B., but he was our S.O.B."

Darris used an illustration from George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, in which the animals are being taught the alphabet, but by the time they reach "C," they can't remember what the first letter was. "If you forget the past," Darris said, "you'll never control your futures."

Dr. Darris paused for a moment during the presentation to clarify his position. "The reason I'm doing this is not to pick on the Americans but to wake up Americans. . .to remind us that the responsibility of self-government is not an easy one," he said.

Darris said that Bush's publicly

stated reasons for opposing Iraq in Operation: Desert Storm were that the U.S. was opposed to aggression, and that we could not allow Saddam to control the production of oil. Some commentators at the time, however, believed he was initiating combat to bolster himself politically.

Darris would rather our focus be directed away from a public figure like Bush and back at ourselves. "A war takes all of us. . .how do we decide [on our position] if we're not informed?" He asked. "We know very little about the world around us."

Darris cited information on the Bush administration's campaign, through the advertising firm, Hill & Knowlton, to generate sympathy for Kuwait and hostility toward Saddam Hussein. The book also covers the suppression of journalistic footage of U.S.-inflicted carnage.

In relation to that carnage, which affected a large amount of civilian targets, Darris asked, "30% of our bombs hit their targets—where did the other 70% land?"

The Contemporary Conundrum

Having thus finally laid the historical foundation, Darris turned to our contemporary involvement with Iraq under President Bill Clinton, starting with "Operation: Desert Fox."

Darris pointed out that the U.N. Resolution, under which U.N. weapon inspectors are currently scrutinizing Iraq, calls for regional disarmament, and does not target only Saddam. Why then, are we targeting this one nation?

Darris again cited *Animal Farm*, recalling the scene in which Boxer the workhorse is dying, and the animals demand he be taken to a hospital. The ruling pigs arrange his transportation, but then the animals notice the vehicle is actually a glue truck, and confront the pigs.

"Comrades, comrades—it's an ambulance," the pigs reply. "We just haven't painted it yet." Darris paused, then said, "Thank God for children's stories."

The Voices Speak

"Remember, when the bombs are going off," cautioned Darris, "there are citizens on the other end of those bombs who care about their world as much as you do about yours."

Clackamas student and U.S. Army Warrant Officer Casey Clark, who is a veteran of both the engagement in Panama and the Gulf War, described with difficult-to-control emotion crossfire situations in Panama where U.S. troops were ripped apart by their fellows' bullets.

"If you see someone die in a battlefield situation, you will suffer a horrific experience. . .what the politicians don't understand is that it stays with you forever," Clark said.

Darris further emphasized the human angle with the current medical plight of Iraq's children.

"The sanctions are not on Iraq," claimed Darris. "That's a semantical mistake. The sanctions are against people."

Darris then asked if anyone had any comments, stating, "[the Constitution's] been amended 27 times, but never did they take out the first three words: *We the people.*"

Clackamas Student John-Harold Broderick began: "Personally, I don't think we should have sanctions in the first place, but it's a little late now."

"You should lift the sanctions," Clark added, "because you're not accomplishing your goal," namely the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

Sam Paden, a Clackamas alum and Lewis & Clark graduate, brought another powerful perspective. "This whole situation, for me it causes intense fear," he said. "I grew up overseas, in Zaire, Africa, so I have lived with this [fear] all my life. . .I fear that there will be retribution [against the U.S.]"

Darris said that he takes his job as an instructor very seriously, since we as taxpayers pay his salary. "[The College] is the think tank of the Clackamas community," he concluded, and encouraged attendees to contact their congressional representatives to voice their concern.

The Wake of Disillusionment

College President Dr. John Keyser, after the event's conclusion, said, "I thought it was very stimulating. . .I think his message is a very powerful one. That's not the kind of history we want to keep repeating."

Dr. Don Epstein, History and Ju-

daic Studies instructor, had much to say on the colloquium.

"I think Dr. Darris is quite right to depict Saddam as a thug," he said. ". . .I question the fact that if these children in Iraq are starving, why does Saddam keep building palaces?"

He also added that "The Kuwaiti border is not in dispute, and he crossed the border at his peril. . .[Darris] seems to imply that the Iraqis are the victims of the invasion."

When asked to respond, Darris cited journalist Paul Eedle and U.N. Under-Secretary General Denis Halliday, who deny that any U.N. Oil for Food money is going toward Saddam's palaces since the money doesn't go through Saddam.

"If anyone should use caution in dismissing the validity of these facts," Darris said,

"it is someone who has studied the Holocaust all his life."

English Instructor and poet Diane Averill, who initially suggested this colloquium topic to Social Science Chair Don Hartsock, is deeply concerned about this issue. "I thought that Dean Darris did a tremendous job of showing us information not available through the mainstream media."

By the time Darris concluded his lecture, the room was hushed and somber. The faces, facts, and figures, were all much too real to ignore any longer. "Sorry to ruin your day," Darris said in farewell, "but there are many people who have their days ruined all the time."



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Keeping his powerful emotions just below the surface, Panama and Gulf War veteran Casey Clark, a Clackamas student, told his story, relating the looks in his comrades' faces as they realized they had cut down their own men in a Panama crossfire.

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