

Kuwaiti diplomat offers insights to students

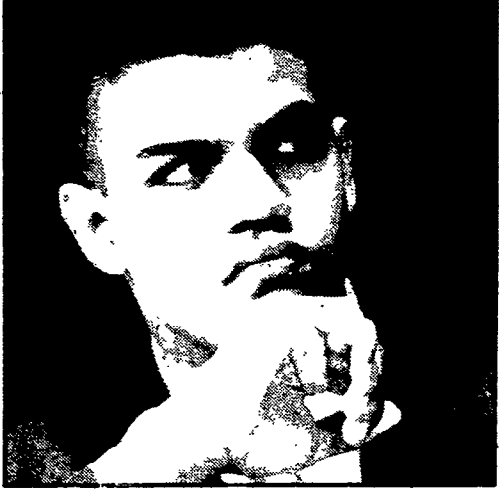
By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Imagine going to Canada for a vacation, and when you returned home to the United States you were told it no longer existed.

That's what happened to Dr. Saif Abbas Abdulla, a Kuwaiti diplomat and vice president of the Washington, D.C.-based Citizens for a Free Kuwait, while he was finishing up his visiting professorship at the University of Utah.

Abdulla offered his insights into the Persian Gulf crisis during a Dec. 4 panel discussion with students and faculty of Aquinas Institute, 1127 Dewey Ave.

After gathering questions from classmates during social studies classes, four Aquinas students — senior Tony Ewing, junior Amy Reynders, sophomore



Aquinas senior Tony Ewing was among the four student panelists who queried Dr. Abdulla about Kuwait.

Ellen Tomer and freshman Daniel Ciavarrì — directed those inquiries and observations at the diplomat.

Abdulla told of how he was stranded in this country after the Aug. 2 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Meanwhile, his wife and four of his five children had been in the United States with him at the time of the invasion, but it took Saif and Zainab Abdulla five weeks to smuggle their fifth child out of Kuwait.

Ewing started off the questions by asking



Dr. Saif Abbas Abdulla, a Kuwaiti diplomat and vice president of the Washington-based Citizens for a Free Kuwait, spoke with students at Aquinas Institute Dec. 4.

the Kuwaiti native what he thought would happen in the gulf region. Abdulla said he remains very optimistic about the situation. He also urged students to pray that the crisis be resolved without the use of force.

In a separate interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Abdulla said that although many people do not think that Saddam Hussein is a man of reason, the Kuwaiti diplomat believes that the Iraqi leader is realistic.

"Reality is taming," Abdulla said. "He (Saddam) doesn't take no for an answer,

but he knows he can lie to his people in order to save face."

For example, Abdulla said, Saddam will try to control the situation if he agrees to talk with President George Bush. "He will probably go back to his people and tell them that he has brought the United States to its knees."

Tomer asked Abdulla if he believed it was right for the United States to deploy thousands of U.S. soldiers as part of Operation Desert Shield.

"If you think the cause of Kuwait is just, then support it," Abdulla said. "If not, then don't."

The Kuwaiti diplomat predicted that if his country falls to Iraq, a renewal of the war between Iraq and Iran is inevitable. "There will be havoc throughout the whole world if the invasion of Kuwait succeeds," Abdulla said.

Ciavarrì asked Abdulla about the legitimacy of the comparison some political analysts are making between Saddam



The entire Aquinas student body attended the hour-long forum.

and Adolf Hitler. Abdulla noted that major differences exist even though the two leaders share similar characteristics.

Saddam is not as popular to the Iraqis as Hitler was to the Germans, he said, but he does possess a lot of the same qualities. Hitler also had resistance from the inside where Saddam has none, Abdulla said.

"If he (Saddam) does have resisters, they have either escaped to London, are in jail or are in the graveyard," the diplomat said.

Reynders wanted to know if Abdulla thought the Kuwaiti government was doing everything in its power to resolve the current situation.

"It is very difficult to resolve anything when a pistol is being drawn to your head. We cannot negotiate under duress," Abdulla stated. "Once they leave, then we will negotiate."

Abdulla said that when Iraq invaded Kuwait in August, Iraqi soldiers looted banks and stole the country's gold. Instead of worrying about the gold, however, Kuwaiti officials smuggled school transcripts out of the country and into the United States. In that way, any student who wants to leave Kuwait to study in the United States will have proper records.

"They (Iraq) went for the gold. We went for education," the diplomat said.

Tomer wanted to know how the lifestyle of the average Kuwaiti has changed since the invasion. Abdulla said that although normal daily activities continue as usual, life inside of Kuwait is miserable.

"There is depression and pain beyond belief," Abdulla said. "The Iraqis try to control the people with machine guns. But you can never let anyone break your heart. You have to keep your chin up and keep fighting."

Abdulla added that the crisis has affected so many people who have never had to fight for what they believe in before.

"We are all victims of a soft culture, taking things for granted. It does not make

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