

# Will we learn history's lessons?

Dear Editor:

Say whatever else you wish about Saddam Hussein; he is a man of his word. He threatened to send missiles against Israel and the Scuds are raining down. He threatened to use oil as a weapon; the Gulf is now awash in it and an ecological disaster of unprecedented proportion threatens our world.

Saddam has threatened to use chemical and biological agents and most recently nuclear weapons against our troops in a land war.

Should we doubt that he will indeed do so? We think not.

Modern chemical weapons, particularly nerve gasses, are extraordinarily toxic. If used ruthlessly, they could cause untold numbers of casualties among our troops and civilian population. Even the far less potent World War I vesicant, mustard gas, is sufficient to wreak havoc on these groups. Saddam is believed to have both nerve and mustard gasses in abundance. He has already used the latter and promises to use the former.

For those of us who are senior (read old) members of the Canisius community, this is the fourth war in which we have seen our country involved. We, at least, should have learned by now that wars are easy to start, but not easy to stop. We should know that their consequences are unpredictable, and that once under way they have a compelling pseudo logic which is inescapable.

So, for those of you who are experiencing your first war, welcome to the club. You are beginning to see the emergence of a pattern which has repeated itself throughout this century. Our latest short, clean, just war is slowly transforming itself into a large, ugly inescapable struggle of un-

foreseeable consequences. You are learning what we have seen many times before; the consequences of war are completely unpredictable and can be unimaginably terrible.

Do we support our troops in the Gulf? Yes. Do we support the U.S. government policies which have put them there? No. Like many others though, we refuse to be caught in the despair of this dilemma.

For a brief period, we had allowed ourselves to hope that the world had learned that war must be avoided at all costs. Now, reality, the brutal illogic of the past, has reasserted itself.

We hope and pray that the world

may emerge from this our latest war cleansed at last of the illusion that war is an acceptable way to settle our differences. Perhaps the lessons which we and the world learn from the Gulf war will finally convince us all that war is never the short, clean, decisive, predictable instrument of policy that we have pretended it to be throughout this century. If so; and only if so, this tragic conflict may not be in vain.

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