

# To the rescue . . .

## Iraq is latest national foe to distract from true source of U.S. woes



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The sinister apparition of tyranny and brutality appears to be rearing its ugly head again in the world, and only one force on the planet has the guts to stop it.

Will our hero arrive in time to squash this abomination and bring peace, love and understanding back to Earth, clearing a path for the uninterrupted pursuit of democracy and the profit margin?

Can the evil plots of Saddam Hussein for world domination and destruction be halted before it's too late?

Fear not, lovers of baseball and Mom's apple pie! For out of the

west comes the answer to the planet's woes, the force which will triumph over all things bad and un-American. After all, are we not the protectors of democracy and open markets throughout the world?

From Panama to Vietnam, from Grenada to Somalia, U.S. forces have ridden in at the last moment like the cavalry thundering into a Western's last scene, restoring order to the galaxy - excuse me - to the PLANET.

Perhaps I was asleep when the decision to appoint our country as Caretaker of Earth was made. It certainly wasn't covered in History 102, and nothing about it has been mentioned in the current events quizzes in my journalism classes.

All the same, the implications do have a certain Machiavellian charm.

George Orwell certainly thought the concept made for good reading in his book about a totalitarian society in "1984." With Big Brother constantly "informing" the public about this crucial war or that necessary battle, the attention of the populace was too fixed on efforts to repel the menacing invaders to concentrate on the true

lems.

And the fact that enemies and allies reversed positions almost with the change of seasons made no difference to a society already utterly confused and somewhat apathetic to the whole affair.

Now, comparisons to Orwell's dark vision of where society may be heading to our present situation with Iraq should not be taken too seriously, but the premises made in the book do have some basis in reality.

For example, the idea to keep the masses distracted from the nitty gritty of bettering society from within is not a new one. The Pax Romana - the era of "peace" enjoyed in the ancient Roman empire - was perpetuated by keeping conquered kingdoms in a state of constant war with each other instead of with Rome. The plan worked well for the empire and kept the conquered peoples busily distracted from the true source of their ills.

And this kind of distraction is still played out today. Keeping the populace focused on a national nemesis is an excellent way of building patriotism, maintaining the country's status quo and raising political support and approval ratings. We can all lean back on our couches, beer in hand, to catch

the latest development on prime time television, much like a

three-part movie of the week or the big game.

It was, after all, the very threat of impending invasion from little "red" men which justified giving the United State's president a blank check to fund our defense program, even though the administration was well aware that the Soviet threat to our domestic tranquility was highly overrated.

But we no longer have the threat of the spread of communism seeping from the four corners of the globe or cryptic quotes from Nikita Khrushchev about crushing us. There are no more bomb shelters being built, no more "run, duck and cover" drills in our public schools. Since the fall of communism and the breakup of the former Soviet Union, U.S. politicians have been faced with a real dilemma. If light cannot exist without dark, goodness without evil, what opposing force can be used politically to galvanize public opinion behind our trusted political servants?

Oh, there was Iran to focus on for a while. But after tying yellow ribbons around trees for the hostages caught in the middle and dancing to such tunes as "Bomb Iran," played to the melody of the Beach Boys' "Barbara Ann," the crisis ended rather amiably.

Now Iraq has come to fill that niche of nemesis for the United States nicely. Clearly, we kicked butt in the early '90s, but Hussein just won't go away. He is the quintessential villain and doesn't seem to realize (or care) that he's outmatched militarily.

Besides, he's so damn easy to despise. Allegations of his use of chemical and biological weapons on his own people don't exactly serve to endear him to the hearts of red-blooded, apple-pie-loving Americans. He's been described as a megalomaniac, a

tyrant and a brutal dictator busy manufacturing weapons of mass destruction.

And our political leaders are chomping on the bit to have another whack at him while most of the remaining U.N. forces watch from the shadows. There are already 24,000 U.S. troops in the region waiting for the word - along with 325 warplanes and two aircraft carrier battle groups - and political patience is wearing thin.

In a Feb. 1 Lincoln Journal Star article, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) was quoted as saying there was "no point in talking to Iraq anymore," and he "would not advise (Clinton) not to bomb Iraq."

Perhaps we shouldn't kick Hussein's butt too quickly. Why not keep him around awhile as our proverbial nemesis, especially since he fits the bill so well? Even Defense Secretary William Cohen admitted in that Journal Star article that military action in Iraq would probably not be a "one-time" affair. And some of our politicians have worked mighty hard to convince U.S. citizens of the threat Iraq supposedly poses to our domestic tranquility.

After riding that six-month victory crest of Desert Storm in the early '90s, our politicians can look forward to even more victory speeches, parades - complete with Gen. William Westmoreland and Mickey Mouse - as well as an overwhelming approval rating by the voters.

It'll be a veritable winter wonderland for political and governmental aspirations, and the world will be safe at last.



MATT HANEY/DN

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