

OFF-CENTER
with Joseph Wheeler

What are we really defending in Saudi Arabia?

His image is everywhere. He's on posters, on passing busses, on the sides of buildings, and on the only television show allowed on the air. His face is three stories high, splashed across newspapers, plastered on tee-shirts, and marched through the streets by loyal fans wielding portraits of their hero.

He's Saddam Hussein, and he's hot stuff in the Middle East.

Thousands of Americans are squatting under the brutal Saudi sun wondering why they are stationed six thousand miles away from home to defend a country most of us couldn't have found on a map prior to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Why are we there? Look at the alternative.

Saddam Hussein is Iraq's most famous star. His big hit is a

colorful show called "Meet the Hostages," in which Uncle Saddam appears nightly trying to "make nice-nice" with Westerners held in Baghdad.

Couch-potatoes are frightened. We've heard how "Mr. Shyguy" Hussein commissioned an oversized art gallery and then filled it with paintings of himself.

The last thing "spuddies" want to see is a TV Guide that looks

like this:
8 p.m. (3 NBC) "Make Room for Saddam," the charming story of a Kuwait family putting up with that lovable dictator, Saddam Hussein.

(13 ABC) "The Blunder Years," Fred Savage stars as the young Iraqi president. This week, "Lil" Saddam tries to assassinate his speech therapist with a pen knife.

(8 CBS) "Murder, He Wrote," Angela Lansbury runs herself ragged trying to keep track of Hussein's disloyal generals and former Kurdish citizens.

(5 FOX) "Hostages....With Children," Al and Peggy Bundy enjoy their stay as "guests" of

Saddam Hussein.
(3 NBC) "Late Night With Saddam Hussein." Letterman's been given the axe and replaced by that laugh-a-minute despot, Saddam Hussein. Join Saddam and his guests Yassir Arafat, Atilla the Hun, Fidel "Big Daddy" Castro, and Special Guest, Vlad the Impaler.

Far fetched? Sure, but keep in mind these shows not yet listed on the fall schedule: "Charlie's Hostages," "Saddam in Charge," and "The Nastier Boys."

Does America have a moral right to take action in the Gulf?

Yes, right after these commercial messages...

Ponder.

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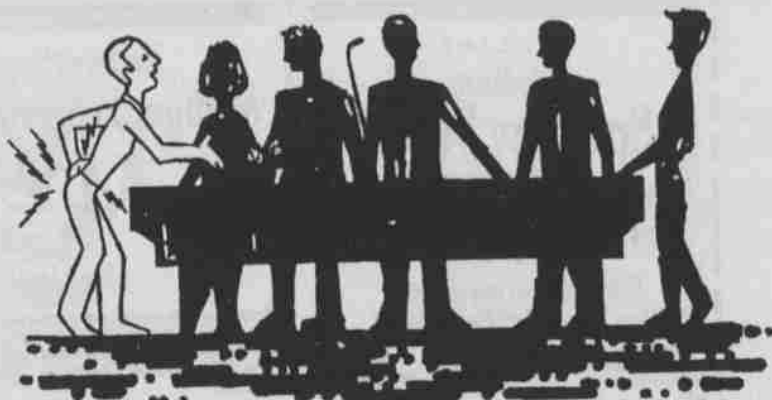
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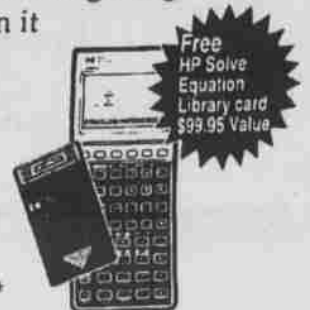
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