

Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq

UK TV documentary : 2000 : dir.
prod: John Pilger & Alan Lowery : scr:

: 55 min
: dir.ph.:

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Barbican Screen Guide comment:

"To complement the Barbican Gallery exhibition "Reporting the World: John Pilger's Eyewitness Photographers", John Pilger will introduce three of his powerful documentaries, and answer questions following each screening.... Pilger's devastating film exposes the effect that UN sanctions have had on the children of Iraq and argues that the motives behind the embargo are anything other than humanitarian."

No further information currently available. Where television journalism in general has become complacent and moribund, sheepishly following the agenda mapped out by the tabloids, uncritically parroting back the values and assumptions of a new political orthodoxy, Pilger has clung to the credentials he first established as an outspoken critic of the Vietnam war, and more recently has brought the same commitment and detachment to questions such as the "New World Order" - the complicity of the World Bank, I.M.F. and G8 in militaristic third world regimes such as Indonesia. Here he dispenses with the received wisdom about Iraq as pariah state to consider the ramifications of America's economic strangulation of Saddam Hussein, a strategy they continue to apply - with less perceptible success - against Castro's Cuba. Twelve months on, in the aftermath of the World Trade Centre catastrophe, such questions acquire more urgency still, as a new Bush regime - which hitherto shrugged off international consensus - attempts to cobble together a universal endorsement for their "first war of the 21st century".

But from another perspective, Pilger is entirely "on message" with that new political orthodoxy: the current trend for worshipping children and childhood (so long as we can continue to manipulate it to our liking). Poverty and economic privation affect people of all ages, and it is simply too manipulative to focus on the children of any deprived population, as though their elders were somehow the authors of their own misfortunes. Every single news report which brings to our television screens the plight of a displaced population is well-larded with close-ups of appealing children, if weeping so much the better.

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