

US, Iraq and the future – by John Pilger

By Torcuil Creighton

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Campaigning journalist John Pilger has vehemently opposed the Bush-Blair war on terror. With power due to be handed to the Iraqi people on Wednesday, I asked Pilger for his thoughts on that country's future, and the prospects for world peace

Torcuil Crichton: What do you believe is the endgame for Iraq?

John Pilger: No-one can predict these things. What I can say is that the uprising in Iraq will continue and the American public may well wake up to the deaths of thousands of its sons and daughters. And just as the mutiny of soldiers and their families and supporters hastened the end in Vietnam, so the same may well happen in Iraq.

TC: Where do you think the 'war on terror' will be in 10 years' time?

JP: The long-term prediction may, just may, be the decline of the American empire, for the same internal reasons of 'overstretch' that the Soviet Union collapsed.

TC: What should Britain do with regards to its 'special relationship' with the US?

JP: Britain should do what the majority of Britons want. The troops should be brought home now. They have no right to be in Iraq; their presence itself is atrocious, quite apart from the abuses we read about almost every day. The 'special relationship' is a sub-imperial relationship; it has no value for the rest of us.

TC: Can the European Union act as a counter to the US's global influence?

JP: Yes, but apart from a few bursts of pique from the French president, there is no sign of that happening in the near future.

TC: What do you think of your former employer, The Mirror, being stripped of its aggressive anti-war stance?

JP: It's a great shame. As I understand it, Piers Morgan was working to a long-term strategy,

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hoping to secure a place in the market and a renewed identity for the paper similar to that which The Mirror once had. Circulation may have dropped, but I think it would have levelled out once people got used to The Mirror's difference from other tabloids, which are in serious decline. Circulation will drop even faster if The Mirror returns to trivia only.

TC: Can journalism really make a difference?

JP: Yes, journalism can make a difference. Information is power; without it, we are immobilised. Look at the invasion of Iraq. Had the American media fulfilled its constitutional role and challenged and exposed Bush's lies, instead of channelling and amplifying them, there would have been no invasion, and thousands of Iraqis would be alive today.

TC: Is television now more important than print?

JP: Television and print journalism are different. Television is the source of most people's information and it has an instant impact. If newspapers complement television, rather than following it slavishly, they prosper, because people look to them to make sense of what they've seen on the news. Sadly, more often than not, they are disappointed.

TC: What to you is 'committed' journalism?

JP: There is only one form of 'committed' journalism we should value, and that is journalism that reflects a commitment not to some spurious equivalence of opposites but to the truth: to stripping away facades and blowing away smokescreens and never accepting the 'official truth' of important events.

TC: Given Australian prime minister John Howard's support of Bush and Blair, how do you feel these days about Australia? Are you ashamed at all to be Australian?

JP: Because human beings do terrible and stupid things, are you ashamed of being a human being? Why should I feel ashamed of my birthright simply because John Howard is prime minister? The problem for Australian society is a colonial mentality that endures. When Australians are moved to demand that their politicians end their obsequiousness to great power, that will be a day to celebrate.

TC: You paint a very cynical view of the world. Is it a cynical world? Or is it simply you that's cynical?

JP: I have never painted a cynical view of the world. I wrote a book called Heroes, which pays tribute to the struggles of ordinary people all over the world. You confuse the majority of people with those in power. Too often journalists believe being cynical about their readers

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and viewers ordains them as journalists. It doesn't; they should redirect their scepticism to the powerful, instead of courting them; for it is they who are truly cynical.

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