



### **Death of a Nation: The Timor Conspiracy**

Director: David Munro

©/Production Company:

Central Independent Television

Producer: David Munro

Timor Co-producer: Max Stahl

Associate Producers: Gill Scrine,

Ana de Juan

Production Secretary: Tracy Whitehouse

Written by: John Pilger

Photography: Max Stahl, Preston Clothier,

Simon Fanthorpe, Bob Bolt, David Munro

Rostrum Photography: Frameline

Graphics: Frameline

Editor: Joe Frost

On-line Editors: Tony Raffe, Allan Ford

Titles: Look

Music: Agio Pereira

Title Music: Steven Faux

Sound: Ian Sherry, Caleb Mose, Mel Marr

Dubbing Mixer: Paul Roberts

Archives: Yorkshire Television Ltd,

Radiotelevisão Portuguesa, Channel 7

Studios (Melbourne), Nine Network,

Australian Broadcasting Corporation, ITN,

New Zealand Television Archive

Special Thanks: Carmel Budiardjo, Ines

Almeida, Liem Soei Liong, Estevo Cabral,

Michele Turner, Steve Cox, Arnold Kohen,

James Dunn, John Taylor, Pat Walsh, Max

Lane, Robert Domm, Mark Aarons, Bruce

Juddery, Mark Curtis, Janet Rayner

Presented by: John Pilger

With:

Alan Clark (*ex Defence Minister*)

"Estevo" (*interviewee*)

Ines Almeida, Abel Guterres (*Timorese exiles*)

Jose Ramos Horta (*Foreign Minister in exile*)

Richard Woolcott

(*ex Australian Ambassador to Indonesia*)

James Dunn

(*ex Australian Consul in East Timor*)

Shirley Shackleton (*interviewee*)

C. Philip Liechty

(*Senior CIA officer, Indonesia, 1975*)

Natalina Horta (*interviewee*)

Fatima Gusmão (*Timorese exile*)

"Delfin" (*Timorese resistance fighter*)

"Cristiano" (*interviewee*)

Dr Mario Soares (*President of Portugal*)

Nugroho Wisnumurti

(*Indonesian Ambassador to the U.N.*)

Sir Alan Thomas (*Head of Defence Sales*)

Jose Gusmão (*Timorese exile*)

Konis Santana

(*commander, Timorese resistance forces*)

Jose Amorin (*Timorese exile*)

Gareth Evans

(*Australian Foreign Affairs Minister*)

Constancio Pinto (*Timorese exile*)

"Jose", "Carlos", "Jao" (*interviewees*)

Archie Hamilton

(*archive footage: Armed Forces Minister*)

ITV tx 22.2.1994

76 mins

### **Palestine Is Still the Issue (2002)**

Director: Tony Stark

Production Company: Carlton Television

Executive Producer: Polly Bide

Producer: Christopher Martin

Written and Reported by: John Pilger

## **HIDDEN TRUTHS: JOHN PILGER AND THE POWER OF DOCUMENTARY**

# **Death of a Nation: The Timor Conspiracy + Palestine Is Still the Issue (2002)**

### **John Pilger introduced his 1994 East Timor film at BFI Southbank as follows:**

At Stanfords in London's Covent Garden, reputedly the best map shop in the world, I asked for a map of the island of Timor.

'Timor?' said a hesitant sales assistant. 'Would you please come with me?' We crossed the floor and stood staring at shelves marked 'South-east Asia'.

'Forgive me,' he said, 'where exactly is it?'

'Just north of Australia.'

'Oh yes, of course.' After a search, all he could find was an aeronautical map with large blank areas stamped, 'Relief Data Incomplete'. 'I have never been asked for Timor,' he said. 'Isn't that extraordinary?'

No, it isn't. East Timor is one of the world's great secrets. The Indonesian dictatorship, which invaded the Portuguese colony in 1975 and has since occupied it, has done an excellent job of limiting international perceptions of the horror and tragedy of East Timor. The basic facts ought to be well known, but they are not. In 1975, after Portugal had announced it was leaving its 450-year-old colony, the military regime in neighbouring Indonesia sent in an invading force – even though it had neither legal, nor historic, nor moral claim to the eastern half of the island.

Just one foreign reporter, an Australian, Roger East, witnessed the invasion; and East became the sixth foreign journalist to die that year. With several hundred Timorese he was dragged to a pier on the waterfront at Dili, the capital, and shot through the head with his hands tied behind his back. His body was thrown into the sea. Thus, in the age of television, hardly any images, or reported words, reached the outside world. There was just one radio voice, picked up in Darwin, 300 miles to the south, rising and falling in the static. 'The soldiers are killing indiscriminately,' it said. 'Women and children are being shot in the streets... This is an appeal for international help... This is an SOS. We appeal to the Australian people. Please help us...'

No help came; and some 200,000 people, or one-third of the population, have since perished. Proportionately, not even Pol Pot killed as many Cambodians. The United Nations passed a total of ten resolutions calling on Indonesia to withdraw its troops 'without delay'. However, unlike the UN's resolve when Saddam Hussein invaded Iraq in 1990, nothing happened. What in other countries would be condemned as barbarous behaviour was, it seemed, deemed quietly acceptable by the 'international community'.

Since General Suharto began his rise to power in the mid-1960s, Indonesia has been regarded by the West and Japan as an 'investors' paradise'. Governments have vied with each other to sympathise with 'Indonesia's problems' – and to trade with the 'stable' regime in Jakarta and to sell it arms. In 1994 Britain became Indonesia's biggest arms supplier with an £800 million deal for Hawk ground attack 'training' aircraft.

Director David Munro and I travelled extensively, and clandestinely, in East Timor, to make our documentary film *Death of a Nation: The Timor Conspiracy*. We found a land of crosses. They crowd the eye. There are great black crosses etched against the sky, crosses on peaks, crosses spilling down hillsides and at almost every bend in the road. In our film we show an extraordinary document in which, in a meticulous hand, a Timorese priest has recorded the murder of almost 300 people in just one

This film was inspired by Amira Haas' book 'Drinking the Sea at Gaza'

Production Manager: Lynn Hodgkinson

Location Fixers: Khamis Golani, Nidal Rafa, Taghreed El Khodary

Cinematographer: Preston Clothier

Rostrum & Graphics: Chris Shelley

Archive Consultant: James Barker

Archive Film: British Movietonews Library,

CBS Television, Imperial War Museum,

ITN Archive, US National Archives

Still Photographs: John Garrett,

John Tordai, Reuters

Editor: Joe Frost

On Line Editor: Michael Sanders

Composer: Mitch Dalton

Sound Recordist: Grant Roberts

Dubbing Mixer: Damian Reynolds

Consultants: Neil Sammonds, Graham Usher

Special Thanks: Anthony Arnove, Chris

Doyle, Gill Fenwick, Katherine Grincell,

Ne'ev Gordon, Laurelle Keough, Peretz

Kidron, Nasser Jarallah, Nick Lockett, Nili

Aslan, Physicians for Human Rights (Israel),

Greg Philo, Edward Said, Pat Smith

ITV tx 16.9.2002

53 mins

## **HIDDEN TRUTHS: JOHN PILGER AND THE POWER OF DOCUMENTARY**

**The Golden Dream** La Jaula De Oro

Tue 5 Nov 20:45; Thu 14 Nov 18:10;

Sun 24 Nov 15:30

**I Am Not Your Negro**

Sat 9 Nov 15:30; Thu 21 Nov 18:30

**Lousy Little Sixpence + Utopia**

Sun 10 Nov 14:50

**The War You Don't See** Sat 16 Nov 18:10

**Year Zero: The Silent Death of Cambodia**

**+ Breaking the Silence: Truth and Lies in**

**the War on Terror**

Mon 18 Nov 18:10

**Burp! Pepsi v Coke in the Ice Cold War**

**+ Flying the Flag: Arming the World**

Sat 23 Nov 17:45

**The Coming War on China**

Sat 23 Nov 20:10; Fri 29 Nov 18:15

**The Ballymurphy Precedent**

Tue 26 Nov 18:10 (+ intro by director

Callum Macrae); Sat 30 Nov 12:20

**The documentaries in this season contain  
distressing scenes of both violence and  
racism related to the events they cover**

**With thanks to**

John Pilger, Jane Hill, Sam Pilger,

Christopher Hird, Matt Hird,

David Boardman, Marcus Prince

Programme texts compiled by John Pilger,

Jane Hill, Sam Pilger, Christopher Hird,

Matt Hird, David Boardman, Maggi Hurt

and David Somers

Selections from Hidden Truths can be found  
on **BFI Player**

For more information about John Pilger's  
films go to [johnpilger.com](http://johnpilger.com)

village, now known as the 'village of the widows'. We found a nation of unsmiling people. In the mountains we entered what the Indonesian army calls a 'control area'. To the people who must live there, it is little better than a concentration camp. People cannot move freely without permission and farmers have been prevented from returning to their land, resulting in at least one famine, claiming thousands of lives.

In November 1991 a brave British cameraman, Max Stahl, filmed the massacre of some 200 people in the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, the capital. We hope that our film will pick up where his left off and demonstrate again the tremendous positive appeal of documentary television to a majority audience. Our film shows evidence that the survivors of the Santa Cruz massacre were themselves murdered. According to one estimate, more than 450 people were killed or have 'disappeared'. We also have eye-witness evidence that Western arms, including British aircraft, have been used in East Timor in spite of 'guarantees' to the contrary.

One of many courageous Timorese interviewed, Antonio (a pseudonym), said: 'The Indonesians use spies everywhere; and certain things are not to be said, even in the family. But a human body and mind have limitations. Once it boils over, people just come out and protest and say things, which means the next day they are dead... but we are resisting, and we shall never stop. We ask only that the civilised world remembers us, and now supports us.'

Not surprisingly, the Indonesian Government does not welcome television cameras to occupied East Timor. In 1975 its troops murdered six foreign newsmen, including two television crews and two Britons. According to Amnesty International, the regime maintains a blacklist of 33,000 people banned from entering and leaving the country. With this in mind, director David Munro and I planned our filming with care, and a little enterprise. We considered a number of slightly eccentric subterfuges. Priests was one rejected early, followed by ornithologists, although we did acquire the latest volume of *Birds of Borneo, Java and Bali*. This was overtaken by 'travel consultants'. A London travel agency provided us with documents that lauded our business acumen.

David and I flew out first, followed by a voluntary aid worker and cameraman Max Stahl. We each had a tiny Hi-8 video camera, which could operate through a gauze screen in a shoulder bag. We reckoned that two of us would be caught, probably David and myself; but none of us was. Our video tape was sent out through the resistance network and carried out by David and myself, taped to our legs and crotches. Of course, the greatest risk was borne by those Timorese who were interviewed in East Timor. None is identified in our film; and we have arranged for the most vulnerable to escape the country. That our filming succeeded at all is a tribute to a remarkable people who, after 18 years of horror, remain, in their hearts, undefeated.

John Pilger, *Radio Times*, 19 February 1994

*Death of a Nation* played a key role in bringing the plight of the Timorese people under occupation to the world's attention. After East Timor finally gained formal independence from Indonesia in 2002, John Pilger was awarded the Order of Timor-Leste, the country's highest honour, in recognition of the importance of his work.

## **Palestine Is Still the Issue (2002)**

Some 28 years after his first film in Palestine, writer and presenter Pilger used the same title to emphasise how little had changed for the people of Gaza and the occupied West Bank. The film brings home their suffering and that of Israelis who had also lost loved ones. Pilger had long called for a two-state solution – something that, towards the end of his life, he felt was unlikely to be achieved.

## **TEAR THIS BUILDING DOWN: JAMES BALDWIN ON FILM**

### **Go Tell It on the Mountain**

Mon 21 Oct 20:30; Fri 22 Nov 18:10 (+ intro)

### **If Beale Street Could Talk**

Tue 22 Oct 14:30; Fri 22 Nov 20:40;  
Sat 30 Nov 17:50

### **I Heard It through the Grapevine**

Thu 24 Oct 20:40; Sun 3 Nov 13:30

### **A Raisin in the Sun**

Sat 26 Oct 15:30; Sat 9 Nov 18:10;  
Thu 28 Nov 20:30

### **I Am Not Your Negro**

Sat 26 Oct 20:35; Sat 9 Nov 15:30;  
Thu 21 Nov 18:30

### **Color Adjustment**

Fri 1 Nov 20:55; Mon 4 Nov 18:10

### **James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket**

Fri 8 Nov 18:15; Mon 18 Nov 20:35

## **IN PERSON & PREVIEWS**

### **Film Africa Closing Night:**

#### **Black Tea + intro and Q&A**

Sun 3 Nov 17:50

#### **Vera: End of an Era + Q&A with Brenda**

#### **Blethyn, Ann Cleeves and guests**

Tue 5 Nov 18:10

#### **London Korean Film Festival Opening**

#### **Gala: Victory bik-to-ri + Q&A with director**

#### **Park Beom-su**

Wed 6 Nov 18:45

#### **Art of Action: The Train + intro with**

#### **Christopher McQuarrie and Eddie**

#### **Hamilton, presented by London Action**

#### **Festival**

Fri 8 Nov 20:30

#### **London Korean Film Festival Closing**

#### **Night Gala: Love in the Big City Dae-dosi-**

#### **ui Sarang-beop + Q&A with director E.oni**

Wed 13 Nov 18:45

#### **Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band: Still Barking –**

#### **Colour Me Pop + Q&A with band members**

#### **and special guests, hosted by Samira**

#### **Ahmed**

Thu 14 Nov 18:15

#### **Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI**

Mon 18 Nov 18:30

#### **Preview: Moana 2 + Q&A with David**

#### **Derrick Jr, Jason Hand, Dana Ledoux**

#### **Miller, Christina Chen and Jared Bush**

Sun 24 Nov 10:30

#### **Art of Action – Special TV Preview: SAS**

#### **Rogue Heroes + Q&A with writer Steven**

#### **Knight and cast members (tbc)**

Tue 26 Nov 18:15

## **John Pilger: Why my film is under fire (2002)**

An unforeseen threat to freedom of speech in British broadcasting emerged last week. It was triggered by the showing of my documentary, *Palestine Is Still the Issue*, on ITV. The film told a basic truth that is routinely relegated, even suppressed – that a historic injustice has been done to the Palestinian people, and until Israel's illegal and brutal occupation ends, there will be no peace for anyone, Israelis included.

Most of the film allowed people to tell their eyewitness stories, both Palestinians and Israelis. What was unusual was that it disclosed in detail the daily humiliation and cultural denigration of the Palestinians, including a sequence showing excrement smeared by Israeli soldiers in a room of children's paintings. The film was accurate, restrained and fair; the longest interview was with an Israeli government spokesman. Every word and frame was subjected to a legal examination for accuracy and to ensure it complied with the fairness regulations in the Broadcasting Act.

Our historical adviser was Professor Ilan Pappé, the distinguished Israeli historian. He wrote to Carlton Television that 'the film is faultless in its historical description and poignant in its message'. None of this deterred the chairman of Carlton, Michael Green, a supporter of Israel's policies, from abusing the programme makers in the *Jewish Chronicle*, calling the film 'inaccurate', 'historically incorrect' and 'a tragedy for Israel'.

Not one of his accusations was, or can be, substantiated. Professor Pappé called the attack 'an attempt to delegitimise any criticism of Israel'. This was followed by an unprecedented rebuke of its chairman by Carlton's Factual Department, which stood by the film's accuracy.

What is disquieting is that Green had actually seen the film before it went to air, and had not alerted the programme makers to his concerns, waiting until the Jewish Board of Deputies, the Conservative Friends of Israel and the Israeli embassy expressed their 'outrage' at a film transmitted after most people were in bed.

A 'pro-Israel' film is now being demanded by them and Green. What does this mean? My film was pro-Palestinian in as much as it was pro-justice. Most of those interviewed were patriotic Israelis, including the war veteran father of a teenage girl killed in a suicide bombing. He and others put the lie to the standard Zionist cry that any criticism of Israel is antisemitic, a claim that insults all those Jewish people who reject the likes of Ariel Sharon acting in their name.

So what does 'balance' mean? A film approved by the Israel lobby? This lobby is currently orchestrating an email campaign against my film; curiously, many of the emails are coming from America, where it has not been shown.

At the heart of this is a failure to acknowledge the overwhelming imbalance in the British media in favour of the Israeli point of view. ITV deserves great credit for funding and broadcasting my film, which sought to redress a little of this. The BBC would have never dared to incur the wrath of one of the most influential lobbies in this country, as Tim Llewellyn, the BBC's Middle East correspondent for many years, says in a letter in today's *Guardian*. He accuses the BBC of 'continuing to duck' its public service duty to explain 'the true nature of the disaster [of the occupation] and Israel's overwhelming responsibility for it'.

This general bias is verified by a remarkable study of the television coverage of the Middle East, conducted last May by the Glasgow University Media Group. The conclusions ought to shame broadcasters. The research shows that the public's lack of understanding of the conflicts and its origins is actually compounded by the 'coverage'. Viewers are rarely told that the Palestinians are victims of an illegal military occupation. The term 'occupied territories' is rarely explained. Only 9% of

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young people interviewed know that the Israelis are both the occupiers and the illegal 'settlers'.

The selective use of language is striking, says the study. Words such as 'murder', 'atrocious' and 'terrorism' are used almost exclusively in relation to Israeli deaths. The extent to which broadcasters assume the Israeli perspective, says Professor Greg Philo, 'can be seen if the statements are reversed ... We did not find any [news] reports stating that "The Palestinian attacks were in retaliation for the murder of those resisting the illegal Israeli occupation."'

For years, journalists have complained about Zionist hate mail and the pressure of the 'regular call from the Israeli embassy' to current affairs editors. This can take a subtle form: pressure is applied to correspondents in Jerusalem, who then shape their reports accordingly in the interests of what they tell themselves is 'balance', but is, in effect, censorship by omission. The system gets the Israelis off their backs and 'makes life bearable'.

If Michael Green and his vociferous friends succeed in intimidating ITV and the Independent Television Commission, the freedom of broadcasters to be more than mere channellers of 'official truth' and to offer viewers suppressed facts and a true diversity of perspective will be destroyed. No matter how big and powerful the corporate media, journalists and broadcasters have a duty to resist on behalf of the public we are meant to serve.

John Pilger, *The Guardian*, 23 September 2002

### Professor Ilan Pappé's letter to *The Independent* regarding its coverage of 'Palestine Is Still the Issue'

Sir: The Western media coverage of the Palestine conflict tended for years to accept the Israeli interpretation of Palestine's history. This is of course a biased presentation of the Palestine question, based on an insistence that the conflict is a complicated affair that can only be deciphered by the Israelis themselves.

There are parts of the conflict's history which are indeed complex and it will not be simple to solve it. But as *Palestine Is Still the Issue*, John Pilger's excellent film, shows us there are two crystal-clear facts that cannot be obscured by propaganda and bias: in 1948 Israel ethnically cleansed Palestine to make room for itself and as a result took over 78 per cent of Mandatory Palestine; secondly, in 1967 Israel imposed a brutal and callous occupation over the remaining 22 per cent of the land, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. From 1993 until 2000 some parts of these 22 per cent were placed under indirect occupation, but even that is now history: the West Bank is fully reoccupied and the Gaza Strip turned into a huge prison camp, guarded by the Israeli military forces, surrounded by an electric fence.

In his admirable and balanced film, John Pilger showed us these two simple facts, focusing on the second. I was one of the film's historical consultants, and had seen and checked the transcript. The film is faultless in its historical description and poignant in its message. It also includes a lengthy interview in which the official Israeli point of view is brought in full.

Criticism of such a film is of course legitimate and can even be constructive. However, the response of Carlton's chairperson, as reported in your article 'Carlton chairman criticises its own documentary on Israel' (20 September), and that of the Jewish Board of Deputies was of a completely different kind. It was meant to delegitimise any attempt, in the electronic or printed media, to expose in full the horrors of the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

People like myself hoped that at least in Britain, unlike other parts of the world, freedom of expression would be respected. God forbid, if even in Britain one cannot tell the truth about Palestine, or report the abuses of civil and human rights wherever they occur.

23 September 2002