

Omar amirallays flood in baath land movie review examples

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Omar Amirallay's 2003 film, *Flood in Baath Land*, takes a look at how the damming of the Euphrates river reflects the changes in Syria since the rule of Al Assad. The film opens with the scene of a boat on Lake Assad, and a man speaks about how the houses of the people he knew since childhood are now drowned under the water, but that they still recall where their old homes are located.

In contrast to this man's reflections, much of the film focuses on the filmmaker's visit to the areas affected by the Tabqa dam. There he finds militantly loyal parliament members, teachers, and students who describe Al Assad as "The Immortal." School slogans include "Pioneers - Baath," "One Arab Nation, bearing an eternal message," and "Our goals—United . . . Freedom . . . Socialism." The film demonstrates that a lot of time is spent in school teaching the children nationalistic values and repeating or shouting the chants and slogans of the Baath party.

One of the most interesting lessons that the children learn in school is the Baath party's reason and analogy about why the Euphrates river was dammed. In the lesson, the river is personified. As the teacher says to the class, the "Euphrates dam is not an engineering project exclusive to Syria, but a nationalistic project, one of the liberation projects." He then asks the students, "What did the Euphrates river turn into after going to Revolution School?" and the children respond, "It turned into a civilized river." The children are so completely inculcated by the party slogans and ideals that the teacher does not believe that any of them could possibly refuse to join any of the nationalistic student organizations. It is ironic that a party that preaches freedom offers so little variety of thought.

The film closes once again on the waters of the lake that the damming of the Euphrates created. The man who spoke about his drowned village speaks again, saying that “ So many superficial matters can be forgotten by Men. But our case is as deep as history itself and cannot be forgotten.” Despite that, it seems their children have forgotten because he then adds, “ Of course, our children are not aware of what we have experienced. They have known this lake since they were born; they think it is the Euphrates.” The conclusion of this film creates the impression that the Baath Party’s slogans and goals have produced the opposite effect of the words about freedom that are still commonly spoken by its supporters. It seems more as if, from childhood, Syrian citizens are trained to be unquestioning and loyal party members. It seems as if they have no other option.

Works Cited

Flood in Baath Land. Dir. Omar Amirallay. AMIP - ARTE France. 2003. Film.