

# Timmerman's Morality

I had the misfortune of meeting Kenneth R. Timmerman in Baghdad in the early 1990s, just after the first war against Iraq. I was there in my capacity as coordinator for the Committee to Save the Children of Iraq, which had just delivered one of many shipments of medicine, medical equipment, and powdered milk, for distribution to the Iraqi population. People were dying—particularly the aged and the very young—due to the economic sanctions imposed in 1990.

Timmerman, who was in Baghdad ostensibly as a journalist, seemed to think the gathering in the Rashid Hotel (actually a press conference by UN authorities involved in the same humanitarian aid program) was just another cocktail party. I asked him what his impression of the social conditions in Iraq was. ×What do you mean, suffering?× he shot back. ×There's plenty of food in this country! I've been down south, and I've seen the rice fields. There's plenty. No one's starving. And if they were, it's because the government is withholding supplies.× When I pointed out that Iraq prior to the war had been dependent on imports for 70% of its food supplies, and that now there was not enough to feed the population, he was not impressed. He mumbled something about how ×the Arabs can't do anything right, anyway.× It wasn't easy to understand his words precisely; must have been that ice cube he was sucking on.

—*Muriel Mirak-Weissbach*