

United Kingdom Parliament

The veteran Labour MP and prominent Jewish parliamentarian, Gerald Kaufman, yesterday launched a ferocious attack on the Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, denouncing him as a "war criminal" who was staining the Star of David.

5.43 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I became a friend of Israel when I was eight days old, and I have the scar to prove it. *[Laughter.]*

The confrontation between Ariel Sharon's Government and the Palestinian terrorists has become an international crisis, which, unless handled decisively, could create a dangerous wider conflict and disrupt the economies of the developed world. The suicide bombings organised by Palestinian terrorist groups are atrocities with which no civilised community can cope. Earlier this month, an Israeli friend visited me here and told me that his trip was an escape from hell. He went back to hell. Last week, a suicide bomber blew himself up at the bus stop outside his kibbutz, where I have stayed many times, killing eight innocent people.

The deaths of hundreds of innocent Israelis are horrifying and have created an unsustainable atmosphere in Israel. The suicide bombers are mass murderers whose aim is to kill the maximum number of victims. Yet we need to ask ourselves why young Palestinians, men and women with their lives before them, decide to turn themselves into human bombs. We need to ask how we would feel if we had been occupied for 35 years by a foreign power that denied us the most elementary human rights and decent living conditions. We need to ask what the Jews did in comparable circumstances. In 1946, the Irgun, controlled by Menachem Begin, who later became Israeli Prime Minister, blew up the King David hotel in Jerusalem, slaughtering 91 innocent people, 17 of them fellow-Jews.

Ariel Sharon responds to the suicide bombers by using the full force of the Israeli army. He is having absolutely no effect in ending the terrorist acts. The suicide bombings and the slaughter of Jewish innocents continue and, as Colin Powell said while in Israel, will go on—not only regardless of what Ariel Sharon's army does, but impelled by what it does. We have now witnessed—my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd) described her experiences—the full impact of the Israeli assault on the Palestinians. We have seen what happened in Jenin.

In 1948, the Palestinians denounced what they described as a massacre in the village of Deir Yassin. It was denied that there was such a massacre, but it was later officially established by the incoming Israeli Government that 254 Palestinians had been murdered wantonly by Begin's Irgun and the Stern gang, led by Yitzhak Shamir—later, like Begin and Sharon, a Likud Prime Minister.

It is undeniable that something dreadful happened in Jenin. Despite an Israeli attempt at a cover-up, the press have now managed to get into Jenin. The Telegraph newspapers, which are pro-Sharon in their editorial line, deserve credit for reporting objectively what happened in Jenin last week. *The Sunday Telegraph* said: "Without doubt something very terrible had happened to the Palestinian refugees there". Yesterday's edition of *The Daily Telegraph* described how Israeli soldiers beat Muntaha Seraya with their fists and guns after bursting into her home. Four months pregnant, she suffered a miscarriage half an hour after the soldiers left. Today's *Daily Telegraph* accepts the Palestinian estimate of hundreds killed. *The Times* today describes the "stench of death" in Jenin, and *The Independent* calls what happened there a "war crime".

The difference between the Deir Yassin massacre and what happened in Jenin is that Deir Yassin was the work of terrorist groups denounced by mainstream Jewish organisations, whereas the horrors in Jenin were carried out by the official Israeli army. In 1901, Henry Campbell-Bannerman asked, "When is a war not a war?" Talking about the British Government and the Boer war, his answer was, "When it is carried on by methods of barbarism." Sharon has ordered his troops to use methods of barbarism against the Palestinians. Two thousand years ago, Tacitus said, "Solitudinem faciunt pacem appellat", "They made a desert and called it peace."

That is a precise description of Sharon's actions. It is time to remind Sharon that the star of David belongs to all Jews, not to his repulsive Government. His actions are staining the star of David with blood. The Jewish people, whose gifts to civilised discourse include Einstein and Epstein, Mendelssohn and Mahler, Sergei Eisenstein and Billy Wilder, are now symbolised throughout the world by the blustering bully Ariel Sharon, a war criminal implicated in the murder of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila camps and now involved in killing Palestinians once again.

Sharon is not simply a war criminal; he is a fool. He says that Jerusalem must never again be divided, yet it is divided in a way that it has not been for 35 years. I used to walk, shop and dine in east Jerusalem. No westerner or Israeli would dare to do that now. The state of Israel was founded so that Jews would no longer be penned up in ghettos. Now the state of Israel is a ghetto: an international pariah.

Sharon has reduced Israel's economy to its worst state for nearly half a century. As a consequence of his policies, more innocent Israelis have been killed by terrorists than for decades. More Israeli soldiers are being killed than at any time since Sharon tricked Begin into invading Lebanon 20 years ago. Sharon has rehabilitated Yasser Arafat, who had become sidelined and discredited and is now a Palestinian icon. The United States Secretary of State waited on Arafat in Ramallah like a petitioner. If Sharon succeeds in exiling him, Arafat will be welcomed throughout the world as a spokesman for the oppressed Palestinian people.

Sharon's most dangerous enemy is Iraq. Although I ardently wish for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, I have my doubts about taking action against him now because the confusion in American policy makes success extremely unlikely. The current fighting in

Afghanistan involving the Royal Marines six months after we first went in shows how much more difficult a campaign would be in Iraq, with its huge, well equipped armed forces. In any case, Sharon has made it impossible for the Americans to take action against Iraq. If they did, the whole Muslim world would be united against the United States, the coalition against terrorism would disintegrate, and western economies could suffer a disaster comparable to the oil shock of 1973.

It is time for the United States to take action. Sharon must make a full withdrawal from Palestinian territories. If he does not, economic sanctions and an arms ban must be imposed. In 1956, President Eisenhower ordered the Israelis to withdraw from Sinai, which was occupied during the Suez war, and the Israelis, under a sensible Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, complied.

In 1991, when the Israeli Prime Minister, former terrorist and assassin Yitzhak Shamir refused to participate in peace talks in Madrid, President Bush senior imposed economic sanctions by withholding \$10 billion in loan guarantees from the Israeli Government, and Shamir turned up in Madrid. President George W. Bush told the Israelis to withdraw from the Palestinian territories. Instead, Sharon has stepped up his aggression. Jenin has happened since Bush's call for withdrawal. The international credibility of the United States presidency is at stake. If Bush continues to be defied by Sharon, the United States presidency will be proved ineffectual with ominous consequences for the entire free world.

Our Prime Minister is an internationally respected statesman. He must use his influence with the United States—the special relationship—so that Bush speedily compels Sharon to return Israel to the international community. No alternative is acceptable. If it does not happen, the outlook for us all is bleak.

http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/cgi-bin/htm_hl?DB=ukparl&STEMMER=en&WORDS=gerald+kaufman+&COLOUR=Red&STYLE=&URL=/pa/cm200102/cmhansrd/cm020416/debtext/20416-13.htm#20416-13_spnew7