

A war has been started and the complications of this war started by the Iraqis on August 2 obviously could be absolutely devastating. The complications of this war to the Iraqis themselves are incalculable.

• (1850 )

It has become apparent by the events in the last few minutes that we now can assume that nothing less will be acceptable other than the total destruction of Saddam Hussein and his political apparatus. Apparently nothing else will suffice. What a tragedy.

The country of Iraq itself is beautiful. It is a land of historical significance that goes back to the Garden of Eden. Noah and his sons built the ark in that land. The ruins of the city of Babylon about 100 kilometres from Baghdad attest to the historical significance of the region. It is the land of Christ and Paul.

The city of Baghdad itself, which is apparently now under siege by the allied forces, played a significant and historical role in the development of world commerce and trade. It was the crossroads of civilization at one point. It played a key role in that part of our recent history when the Arab world was the most significant society known to the world encompassing much of Europe and the entire Middle East. It has a proud and noble history.

Baghdad's people are proud. The country has progressed by Arab standards significantly. The city of Baghdad itself is a modern city based on western technology.

I, along with a couple of my colleagues from the House of Commons, was in Baghdad not that many weeks ago. The first thing that struck us as we drove from the airport into Baghdad was how the country had suffered under the ravages of a costly war in terms of hundreds of thousands of lives of young men and also in economic terms. That war cost a lot.

It struck us how a country that had undergone such tremendous pressures could have developed throughout all of those eight long years of its war with Iran to the point where it was. The highways were immaculate. The infrastructure, the universities, the schools, the hospitals and the bridges are significant and impressive.

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The country of Iraq maintained that rebuilding program throughout all those years, again at a significant cost to the society. A huge debt was built up.

That debt has contributed significantly to what we have seen today because, obviously, had the country been able to put the dollars that were available to it through its oil revenues to building even more of its society than to the war it had with Iran, then indeed it would have been even that much more significant today than it is.

I want to talk just about the enlightenment of the Iraqi society. Much of the movers and shakers, the people who are the doctors, the lawyers and the professors have been educated in western society. A lot of them have been educated in this country. A lot of them have been educated in the United States.

I feel confident by saying that what has transpired since August 2 has been a terrible embarrassment to these people to know that they are associated with a regime that could be as cold and calculating as it has been that would wrought such destruction on a neighbouring state.

How many times did I say during the period of time with the Iraqi-Iranian situation what a comfort it would be to know that those dollars and costs in terms of lives could be better expended in bringing peace and harmony to the region rather than sacrificing them in the manner that they were.

That apparently is the mentality of the people who Saddam Hussein has put in positions of authority under him.

I have met many Iraqis who are honest and good and sound and solid people. I have a great deal of respect for them. I have a great deal of respect for the ambassador to this country, Mr. Al Shawi, whom I know to be a decent and honourable person. I would like to caution that we, as Canadians do not react to what is taking place now, categorizing all Iraqis and the people of Iraq because of the madness of one individual who is in power and is controlling the machinery of war in that nation.

Iraq has had some legitimacy. Iraqis do feel that they have had some legitimacy to do what they have done. Prior to 1916 Kuwait was a part of that country. It was only petitioned by the British.