

Events...

Monday, September 23, 8pm
Joan Peters, author of the prize winning book, *"From Time Immemorial: The origins of the Arab-Jewish conflict over Palestine"* will speak at Beth Sholom Synagogue, 1445 Eglinton Avenue West (at Allen Road).

Toronto One Israel Missions
With Aish Hatorah October 12-20:
Visits throughout Yesha, Shabbat in Hevron, For info: 905-764-1818 x228.
With BAYT Brotherhood November 3-10:
Visits throughout Yesha, Shabbat in Jerusalem, For info: 905-896-4451.

Commentary...

9/11 Attacks Were Not Motivated by Poverty By Lorne Guntner
Chretien, Clark off base in blaming income disparity for terrorism
Let's be emphatic about this -- Third World poverty was NOT the motivation behind the 9/11 attacks. And it's dangerous to delude ourselves that it was. Of course, on Wednesday, Jean Chretien, our esteemed prime minister, mused that, "You know, the poor, relatively, get poorer all the time. And the rich are getting richer all the time." He concluded that this disparity "was the inspiration" for the attacks.

Chretien was joined in this thinking by Joe Clark, leader of Parliament's tiny Progressive Conservative study group. "I don't think there is any doubt that if you're sitting in the Third World," seeing images of Western affluence, Clark theorized, "that can create a resentment that can lead to extremism." This resentment, caused by income disparity, Clark concluded, was "the root of terror."

Chretien's and Clark's pontifications may pass for clever in some freshman sociology class, but in reality they are so much intellectual cotton candy -- sweet and fluffy but unsubstantial. "Root causes" malarkey is commonplace among the Western world's decision-makers, and not just on the sources of terrorism. They see poverty as the root cause of most criminal and anti-social behaviour.

Yet, the entire root causes movement is little more than false empathy motivated by guilt and the need to appear sensitive and caring.

If poverty causes terrorism, why are so many terrorists rich? Osama bin Laden, of course, has a personal fortune of between \$300 million and \$1 billion. He was raised in mansions, had the wherewithal to travel, study and enjoy expensive recreations. His leading lieutenants were surgeons, engineers, computer scientists and the like.

Likewise, Yasser Arafat is wealthy (even if he did acquire much of his wealth by stealing aid money intended for his people), and he comes from the professional class. Germany's Bader-Meinhof gang, the Red Brigade, Carlos the Jackal, Black September and on and on. The directory of terrorist groups is full of middle- and upper middle-class names.

Perhaps they are resentful of the West. But Marxist class envy is not the same as justifiable bitterness about being poor. Moreover, to suggest that poverty breeds criminality is an insult to the vast majority of poor people who never commit criminal acts.

And if poverty is the root cause of crime, why are the poor crime's most frequent victims? Why are rich neighbourhoods safer than poor ones? If resentment over income inequity were behind the impulse to rob, would it not stand to reason that the poor would be sheltered by criminals, since criminals' principal motivation would not be stealing stuff, but rather righting the unfairness of life's uneven distribution of rewards? Why would criminals hurt the ones they are allegedly attempting to help?

Root causes theorists such as Chretien and Clark, seem to view criminals and

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terrorists as an extension of federal social policy in the case of criminals and of international aid projects in the case of terrorists. The acts of criminals are another form of progressive taxation. The criminals themselves are something akin to tax collectors with prison tattoos.

But the truth is, if there is a root cause of crime, it's simple: Some people are just bad, or even evil. It's the same with terrorism. Al-Qaeda is not motivated by poverty any more than the Nazis were. Bin Laden has twisted Islam into a force for evil the same way Hitler twisted National Socialism. Bad or evil people will do bad or evil things, no matter what their circumstances.

Were the CEOs of WorldCom and Enron motivated by resentment of poverty? Of course not. They were motivated by greed, by what they could gain. It's the same with terrorists and criminals. There are big-scale criminals and terrorists and there are small-scale ones. But to suggest that somehow some criminals and terrorists are justified because of root causes, while others are unjustified because they are motivated purely by self-interest is to make a distinction that does not exist.

Would bin Laden be happy if the West suddenly took half its wealth and gave it to the people of the Third World? No. He won't be happy until he has destroyed the western way of life and thinking. And -- this is critical -- nothing we can do to change our ways will placate him. The flaw that drives him exists within him, not within the West or anything westerners do, no matter how much Chretien and Clark want to win brownie points of the tolerance crowd by professing to understand Islamic extremists' anti-Western hatreds.

Moreover, to the extent that chronic Third World poverty might motivate those who cheer when terrorists murder innocent westerners, the cause of that poverty is not First World greed or a hangover from imperialism or a lack of aid and fair trade or globalization. Rather, it is Third World authoritarianism, cronyism, corruption and tribalism, the Marxist land reform theories that have dominated Third World politics for 40 years, and the refusal to cultivate the precursors of wealth and freedom -- the rule of law, the sanctity of the contract and property rights. And in this, Third World leaders have been aided by the wilful blindness of such gushing Western leaders as Chretien and Clark.

"Root causes" thinking is dangerous, rather than just naive, because if one is to win a war one must correctly assess one's enemy and his motivations, or one will end up waging the wrong war. (Edmonton Journal Sep 15)

The Roots of European Appeasement: It's the 1920s all over again.

By David Gelernter

On November 11, 1920, there was a strange and moving scene in London. The king and his entourage unveiled the Cenotaph in Whitehall and laid solemnly to rest, in Westminster Abbey, an unknown soldier of the Great War. The ceremony had been carefully planned. The whole nation came to a transfixed halt--which had not been planned. No one had foreseen (writes David Cannadine in his essay on Lord Curzon, who designed the ceremonies) the "overwhelming emotion" of that day. Cannadine quotes the Times: "The authorities frankly admit that the extent to which the public imagination has been stirred has exceeded all their expectations." By the end of the week, roughly a million people had visited the Cenotaph and the graveside.

There were ample grounds for grief-stricken remembrance: Some million British Empire soldiers had died in the First World War. But another memory (conscious or not) must have transposed the nation's grief into a different, nearly unbearable key. Almost every visitor at the Cenotaph or the graveside would have recalled August 1914, when war broke out and London rejoiced--uproariously. In fact, virtually all Europe rejoiced uproariously. "Europeans of all stripes," according to the historian Peter Gay, "joined in greeting the advent of war with a fervor bordering on a religious experience." The pacifist philosopher Bertrand Russell writes of discovering, "to my amazement," as he wandered the streets of London, "that average men and women were delighted at the prospect of war." In August 1914, the war's ghastly end was

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unforeseeable and unimaginable. On November 11, 1920, its jubilant beginnings were unimaginable. On that sad November day, millions of Englishmen confronted not merely grief but guilt, and modern Europe was born.

What happens when a fundamental axiom we have believed for generations turns out to be wrong? Today we are finding out. We have believed that the Second World War was a continuation of the First; that the Cold War was a grotesquely extended prolongation of the Second. But the truth cannot have been that simple, because the effects of the Second World War are vanishing while the effects of the First endure.

The First World War seemed unimaginable but turned out to be human, all too human when compared with the Second, which was too big for the mind to grasp. As the Second World War and its aftermath fade, they reveal a "new world order" that is strangely familiar--amazingly like the Western world of the 1920s, with its love of self-determination and loathing of imperialism and war, its liberal Germany, shrunken Russia, and map of Europe crammed with small states, with America's indifference to Europe and Europe's disdain for America, with Europe's casual, endemic anti-Semitism, her politically, financially, and masochistically rewarding fascination with Muslim states who despise her, and her undertone of self-hatred and guilt.

During the decades following the Second World War, this world of Versailles seemed to be gone for good. It had begun to unravel in the 1930s. "The year 1929, the midpoint in the two decades between the wars, was an important watershed," writes Donald Kagan in his "On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace" (1995). "In October of that year Gustav Stresemann died and with him the politically careful, if determined, program of the peaceful revision of the Versailles settlement in Germany's favor. In the same month the Wall Street stock market crash gave impetus to a great depression that swept across the industrialized world, causing political shock waves of great significance in Europe."

Looking around today, we find ourselves in a nightmare house where the clocks all stopped on the eve of an unthinkable disaster. It is 1928 all over again.

The First World War ended on November 11, 1918. The victors met in Paris (the vanquished would have spoiled the party and were not invited); the Treaty of Versailles, which imposed peace terms on Germany, was signed on June 28, 1919. (The Allies settled separately with Austria, Turkey, and Bulgaria.)

Europe pondered the jubilant beginnings and tragic end of the World War--and her spirit was damaged irreparably. On top of which, the victorious allies soon came to feel that the peace they had dictated to the Central Powers was vindictive and unjust--especially the huge reparation payments imposed on Germany as punishment for having started the war. (The exact figure was left unspecified in the treaty, like a blank check.)

The British diplomat Harold Nicolson kept a diary at the Paris Peace Conference, and included excerpts in his classic "Peacemaking, 1919." The last sentence of the book is his verdict on the conference: "To bed, sick of life." Before long, that sentence came to epitomize Europe. Horror-struck guilt and self-hatred blossomed into 1930s appeasement, the policy with which Britain and France approached Nazi Germany's increasingly outrageous violations of the Versailles treaty.

"To bed, sick of life"--the historian Christopher Thorne wrote (in 1967) of the "weary ignorance" of Stanley Baldwin, prime minister twice during the 1920s and again from 1935 to '37; of France's "weakness and despair" between the wars. In 1933, when Nazi rule was just beginning, Churchill spoke of "the mood of unwarrantable self-abasement into which we have been cast by a powerful section of our own intellectuals." That was the year in which the undergraduates of the Oxford Union passed (275 to 153) their infamous motion "that this House refuses in any circumstances to fight for King and Country." In 1936 R.M. Barrington-Ward, assistant editor at the Times, told a staffer that "We are, as the Prayer Book says, 'tied and bound by the chains of our sins' stretching all the way back to the General Election of 1918"--when Britain voted for Lloyd George and vengeance on Germany.

Once upon a time we thought of appeasement as a particular approach to Hitler. We have long since come to see that it is a Weltanschauung, an entire philosophical worldview that teaches the blood-guilt of Western man, the moral bankruptcy of the West, and the outrageousness of Western civilization's attempting to impose its values on anyone else. World War II and its aftermath clouded the issue, but self-hatred has long since reestablished itself as a dominant force in Europe and (less often and not yet decisively) the United States. It was a British idea originally; it was enthusiastically taken up by the French. Today (like so many other British ideas) it is believed more fervently in continental Europe than anywhere else.

Consider the "Continental attitude" towards our proposed war against Saddam Hussein. If you had the Second World War in mind, you might think: Nothing could be more dangerous than to dither while a bloody-minded tyrant builds his striking power. It is crazy to let him choose D-Day, on the theory that if you leave him alone long enough, he will switch personalities and call the whole thing off. Human adults do not switch personalities--but if someone were going to blaze a trail and be first, a bloody swaggering dictator is not the man. Hitler didn't change even when his whole world had burnt to ashes. The last testament he composed in his bunker in 1945 is strikingly like "Mein Kampf,"

dictated in the comfort of his five-star prison cell in 1924.

The wisdom of "act first, dither later" as an approach to threats from tyrannies was borne out by Western experience in the Cold War. When the Soviets threatened Western interests directly by trying to starve West Berlin, put nuclear missiles in Cuba, and float the Arabs to victory against Israel (in 1973) on a tidal wave of weaponry, America did not wring her hands and ponder; she acted fast, and won.

But suppose your attitudes were shaped, consciously or not, by the First World War and its aftermath. In that case, the lesson you'd take away would be very different: Whatever you do, never rush a war. Austria did not have to declare war against Serbia on July 28, 1914, but she was in a hurry to forestall proposed negotiations. Russia did not have to mobilize on the 30th, she was under no military threat, but she mobilized anyway. Germany did not have to go crashing into Belgium on August 4, she was in no danger of being overrun by hot-headed Flemings, but once she had mobilized (which she had to do because Russia had), her famous master-plan (to concentrate on the Western front, pivot through Belgium, and come down on France like a sledgehammer) would be exposed and rendered as useless as lightstruck film unless she hit right away.

Some Europeans know these details and some do not. But what every educated European knows is that World War I could have been prevented if only Europe hadn't been in such a demented hurry to fight. And the graveyards of World War I are a permanent feature of the European landscape. In consequence and in tribute, many Europeans are against all war on principle--defensive or offensive, just or unjust, mandatory or frivolous; and they hate Western civilization into the bargain. Can you blame them? The contempt for Western ideas, morality, religion, and traditions that is so prominent among European intellectuals is not the sheer malice it sometimes seems. Europe has earned the right to hate herself. If things go wrong, a scratch can fester. A pardonable act of (at worst) bad judgment--to whoop up a war along with throngs of your fellow citizens--can turn to scalding remorse as the death toll rises and rises. And such quiet emotions as private remorse can reshape history, when you sum up over a whole civilization.

This frantic compulsion to do nothing was countermanded by the Second World War and the Cold War--both of which centered on totalitarian tyrannies. That Iraq is more like these tyrannies than it is like Imperial Germany seems not to matter to the world's Continental Thinkers, who dominate the opinion-making elite nearly everywhere.

Look at Europe today: The peace of 1919 gave it political shape and intellectual substance. Versailles ratified the transformation of militant Imperial Germany into liberal, democratic Germany--basically the Germany we know today. Of course the liberal, democratic Germany of the 1920s went through several interesting transformations before it reemerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. But that is exactly the point. The effects of the Second World War were profound but are vanishing. (Or: were so profound that they are vanishing.)

The Peace of 1919 recreated the independent Polish and Czech states that had been submerged for generations. It created the independent Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia--which (again) disappeared during the Second World War and its aftermath, and have again popped to the surface as World War II vanishes from the scene like a drug that has worn off. The German, Austro-Hungarian, and Turkish empires were overthrown by the victorious allies in 1919; Imperial Russia overthrew herself. Today's Russia is the logical successor of the 1920s Soviet Union. When Russia made a separate peace with Germany in March 1918, she surrendered huge chunks of territory. Although she regained some with the defeat of Germany and the withdrawal of the German army, and others with the Red Army's victory and the expansion of Communist rule in the early '20s, she only reestablished herself as an empire much later. Stalin's deal with Hitler in 1939 and the defeat of Germany in '45 restored Russia to imperial grandeur--but only temporarily. With the end of the Soviet Union, the Russian Imperium took up where it had left off in 1918, and resumed shrinking. The resurgence of Imperial Russia under the Soviets was a passing fad, or so it seems.

Bolshevik tyranny retreated a step under the New Economic Policy of the 1920s; resumed retreating in the late '80s under Gorbachev, and then disappeared. Had the Second World War not intervened to build up stupendously the power and glory of Stalin and communism, the Soviet Union would presumably have vanished long ago.

The Russian Empire is gone--or so it seems. Why does it seem reasonable to bet against the resurgence of a Russian Empire anytime soon? Because the spiritual legacy of World War I and its aftermath is even more important than the political legacy.

Before 1914, imperialism and colonialism were two of the world's strongest forces. The pre-1914 world is just as strange to us as the world of the '20s is familiar. Listen (as you might to the chirp of an extinct bird) to the world before '14: The historian Edward Hallett Carr quotes the British imperialist Cecil Rhodes--"I contend that we are the first race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race." In working "to maintain the greatness of the Empire," Lord Wolsey wrote,

"I work in the cause of Christianity, of peace, of civilisation, and the happiness of the human race generally."

In the pre-World War I era, England and France led the world in colonial possessions; the emperors of Russia and Austria-Hungary lacked colonies but had vast European empires. The Kaiser in Berlin had a third-rate colonial empire and no proper European empire either, except for odd bits of Poland, Denmark, and France, which hardly counted. So Germany was the world's least-contented great power. The other great European powers quite understood the Kaiser's unhappiness.

Because the empires of Britain and France survived until after the Second World War, it is hard to grasp the big changes in attitude that came about because of the First. Vice President Cheney insisted in a recent speech on the importance of self-determination in Iraq; self-determination is a classic Wilsonian principle, a monument to the 1920s. The Versailles Peace Conference confiscated the colonial possessions of Germany and Turkey, but in most cases handed them over to new rulers not as colonies but as League of Nations mandates, to be prepared for self-rule.

British rule in India was the supreme manifestation of European colonialism. But when the British foreign policy establishment decided, in the 1920s and '30s, that India should become (in due course) a self-governing Dominion--in other words a free country, like Canada, Australia, New Zealand--it discovered to its surprise that Englishmen loved the idea. Colonialism still existed, but the fun had gone out of it. The government's India policy was supported by all three major political parties. Winston Churchill led the opposition; he predicted that British withdrawal would lead to massacres of Muslims by Hindus and vice versa. It turned out he was right. But in the 1920s and '30s, the tide ran overwhelmingly against colonialism--and it is hard to see (despite Churchill) how Britain could have acted differently.

No one defends British appeasement of Hitler; everyone agrees that Churchill was right to oppose it from the start. No one criticizes British appeasement of Gandhi and the Congress party in India (Gandhi and Hitler stand at opposite ends of the moral spectrum, but there is a clear analogy between British attitudes towards the two of them); everyone agrees that Churchill was wrong to oppose it from the start. Hitlerite Germany was the exception. India proved to be the rule.

So modern Europe's visceral loathing of war is a consequence of World War I. Self-determination, anti-colonialism, and the rights of small nations are Wilsonian ideals that took hold in the 1920s. The idea of Western civilization's blood-guilt established itself in the aftermath of the peace of Versailles, bore fruit in 1930s appeasement, and still flourishes today.

The evanescence of World War II, and Europe's political and spiritual (and in some ways economic) return to the 1920s, has practical consequences--for instance, for Jews and for Israel. In the 1920s, anti-Semitism was an accepted element of mainstream European opinion. In the 1920s there was no state of Israel, and few "mainstream" Europeans felt any need for one.

The Palestine mandate had been presented to Britain with the thought that she would carry out the promise of the Balfour Declaration of 1917, to establish "a national homeland for the Jewish people" in Palestine. Palestine at the end of the First World War was impoverished and underpopulated. There was ample room (as events proved) for millions of newcomers. Yet Britain was increasingly inclined to appease Arab agitators by restricting, and ultimately terminating, Jewish immigration. In fairness, Britain was, at the time, as she liked to advertise, "the greatest Mohammedan power in the world." Such statesmen as Edwin Montagu urged Britain repeatedly to be "the friend and head of the Moslem world." Montagu was secretary of state for India in Lloyd George's cabinet--a rabid anti-Zionist, a leading opponent of the Balfour Declaration, and a Jew. The British found the existence of such people as Montagu confusing. Montagu's spiritual disciples live on: One of the most unsettling, least discussed aspects of today's Israel crisis is the part well-placed American Jews in newspapers, TV, and radio have played in slanting the news against Israel. For the most part these seem to be well-meaning people who care so deeply about right and wrong, they have no time to distinguish between true and false. (The left often operates on that basis. Consider its man-the-torpedoes response to Bjorn Lomborg's "The Skeptical Environmentalist.") Meanwhile other American Jews, and their friends, and truth's friends, work frantically to set the record straight.

In 1947, the United Nations (pondering the Holocaust) voted to establish the State of Israel in a smallish fragment of the original Palestine Mandate. In the 1950s, Europe gave Israel substantial support. Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism were out of style. But as the memory of World War II faded, European support for Israel faded too, and anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism made a comeback. The end of the Cold War meant not merely the end of World War II; for Europe, it seems to have meant the end of the Holocaust itself. Europe wants to hate itself, certainly, but not for the sin of killing Jews; for the sin of killing Europeans. An important distinction. So Israel can no longer explain itself to Europe in World War II terms. World opinion (much influenced by Europe) isn't Israel's biggest problem; but it is a big problem.

Yet if the reversion to 1920s thinking is a tragedy for Jews and for Israel, it is also an opportunity. Many Europeans and their admirers think of Israel as a mere colonial power, an ugly European implant in the pristine body of the Arab

Middle East. But there is a much better analogy--to the very states Versailles created in its devotion to self-determination.

In 1914 (for example) there was no such state as Poland. Poland had disappeared from the map in 1795, partitioned like a jumbo apple pie among the powers of east-central Europe. In 1914 it belonged to Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. The reemergence of independent Israel required a unique historical catastrophe. As for Poland's reemergence, "only a prodigy" could have brought that about, Churchill wrote in 1929; "it was necessary that every single one of the three military Empires which had partitioned Poland should be simultaneously and decisively defeated in war, or otherwise shattered."

During the long years of Poland's submersion, many Poles stayed at home; some left for Western Europe or America. Many non-Poles settled in Polish territory. Germany in particular colonized its Polish holdings aggressively.

Obviously the analogy between Poland and Israel is rough. Poland was submerged for 123 years, Israel for nearly two millennia. But the similarities are obvious, too. Lots of Arabs moved to Israel during the years when no Jewish state existed. Lots of Germans moved to Poland. But Poles and Jews maintained an unbroken presence in their homelands. The idea that a Pole returning to Poland is a "colonist" is idiotic; a Jew returning to Israel is no "colonist" either. Nor does the fact of a large Polish diaspora in America make Poland's existence any less necessary. Nor does the Jewish diaspora make Israel less necessary.

Poland's 1919 borders (finally fixed in '21) incorporated a large German minority, many of whom stayed on. Her 1945 borders incorporated even more Germans, most of whom fled or were driven out; the historian Henry Ashby Turner reports a staggering "exodus of between ten and twelve million German refugees from these eastern regions." German refugees from Poland might have been the same kind of festering problem as Palestinian refugees from Israel. They aren't, because Germany took them in--after all, they were Germans. It is tragic whenever a settler of long standing has to pull up roots and move elsewhere. This is a tragedy that Jews, hounded from country to country for 2,000 years, know better than anyone else. It is a tragedy no Jew has ever made light of. But when such refugees can find a new homeland where the language, religion, and worldview are all familiar, it is a manageable tragedy. Jews have known worse.

Many thousands of Jews were driven out of European and Arab countries. Many came to Israel. By way of comparison, Arab refugees who left or fled Israel in 1948 (as Israel struggled to fend off invaders who had jumped her on every side) numbered something over half a million, according to Martin Gilbert in his "Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict." By an interesting coincidence, roughly the same number of Jewish refugees fled from Arab countries (where "most of their communities dated from Roman times," Gilbert notes) to Israel. So things are all even on refugees. Except that they aren't. Because another half million or so refugees came to Israel in the postwar years from the devastated Jewish communities of Europe--more than 150,000 from Poland, over 200,000 from Romania.

Israel might have kept them all in filthy camps, taught them to pine bitterly for their lost homes and eventually sent forth their teenagers to murder Poles and Germans, Iraqis and Egyptians at random, in order to establish themselves as romantic heroes in the minds of self-hating appeasers the world over. But they were Jews, and Israel took them in. For any fair-minded student of history, there is only one conclusion: The Mideast refugee story is first and foremost a story of Jewish refugees. (And yet sometimes, listening to NPR or ABC, you don't get quite that impression.)

Europe should be (you would think) very glad it all worked out this way--that Israel (like Germany) welcomed its countrymen home instead of (like the Arab countries) sending them back where they came from to blow up buses, schools, and supermarkets. Or does Europe feel, in its worshipful admiration of Palestinian refugees, that Jewish refugees should emulate them? Should Israelis whose families lived in Cologne or Cracow for a thousand years go home to murder German and Polish schoolchildren? The next time Europe feels inclined to blast Israel on account of the Palestinians, it might think this over, and cast its mind back to the 1920s, and shut up. "Our wish," Lord Robert Cecil said in 1918, "is that Arabian countries shall be for the Arabs, Armenia for the Armenians, and Judea for the Jews."

The idea that World Wars I and II are a single "thirty years war" has a long heritage. In 1919 Marshall Foch said of the Treaty of Versailles, "This is not peace. It is an armistice for twenty years." (He was right, to the exact year.) Many historians still think so. In his newly published "Shield of Achilles," for example, Philip Bobbitt refers to a great war that "began in 1914 and only ended in 1990." (One important exception is "While America Sleeps," by Donald Kagan and Frederick Kagan, which points out all sorts of disturbing similarities between America's behavior in recent decades and Britain's during the 1920s and '30s.)

Obviously the thirty-years-war idea is true in a way. But there is an alternative tradition too. People at the time understood the Second World War as an unspeakably large event, outside the realm of ordinary history.

Churchill predicted, after the fall of France, that Britain's lonely fight against Nazidom would be remembered as her finest hour for a thousand years. Hitler spoke of a thousand-year Reich. By way of urging his master to join the attack on reeling, staggering France, Italy's foreign minister Ciano told Mussolini that no such chance would recur in 5,000 years. Churchill's contempt for the Axis was unbounded, yet in a speech of September, 1943, he reported Ciano's forecast--five thousand years--with a certain respect in his voice; a certain awe.

So perhaps it is not surprising that World War II should have changed the human mind forever, yet vanished from the world's everyday thoughts like your memory of a dream the next morning. It was too big an event to swallow and has been disgorged. It was too searing to remember and has been repressed--only to live on in the world's nightmares and (indirectly) on the faces of all those calendars we have set back to 1928. (Weekly Standard Sept23)

The writer is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

Take Back Joseph's Tomb By Michael Freund

This past weekend marked two years on the Hebrew calendar since a Palestinian mob seized control over Joseph's Tomb in Shechem (Nablus), ransacking the Jewish holy site and setting it ablaze.

Though a great deal has happened in the interim, it is difficult to forget the painful scenes of mayhem and destruction that were broadcast around the world at the time. There was the smoke billowing from the tomb, as Jewish prayer books and other religious articles left behind by the retreating Israeli army were set alight by the crowd. And then there were the Palestinians with pickaxes and hammers, smashing the stone building which housed the site and tearing it apart, brick by brick, in a frenzy of hate and defilement.

Within two days, as an Associated Press dispatch (October 10, 2000) reported, "the dome of the tomb was painted green and bulldozers were seen clearing the surrounding area," as the Palestinians sought to transform the biblical Joseph's resting place into a Moslem holy site.

It was a shocking display, both of the Palestinians' lack of respect for Judaism and its sacred places, and of Yasser Arafat's unwillingness to comply with his commitments.

In the early hours of October 7, 2000, after days of relentless attacks by Palestinian policemen and Fatah terrorists, Israel withdrew the small contingent of soldiers who had been guarding the site. In exchange, the PA promised to protect it, in accordance with their obligation under the Oslo Accords. Within hours, Joseph's Tomb was reduced to a smoldering heap of rubble.

Israel's pullout from the site was a grave strategic error, marking the first time that the IDF had withdrawn under fire and surrendered territory to the Palestinians as a direct result of violence.

Coming barely a week after the start of the current intifada, the retreat from Joseph's Tomb only served to whet the PA's appetite still further, sending a dangerous signal to Arafat that in the face of unremitting attacks, Israel would capitulate. Who knows what inspiration and encouragement the Israeli withdrawal gave to the budding young terrorists of Fatah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad? The pullback was also an affront to Jewish history and tradition, as Joseph's Tomb had long been a focus of Jewish pilgrimage and prayer.

The late Dr. Zvi Ilan, one of Israel's foremost archeologists, described Joseph's Tomb as "one of the tombs whose location is known with the utmost degree of certainty and is based on continuous documentation since biblical times" ("Tombs of the Righteous in the Land of Israel", p. 365).

The Book of Joshua (24:32) states explicitly, "The bones of Joseph which the Children of Israel brought up from Egypt were buried in Shechem in the portion of the field that had been purchased by Jacob." Ancient rabbinic texts such as the Midrash mention the site, as did the early Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea, who visited it nearly 1,700 years ago. Arab geographers, medieval Jewish pilgrims, Samaritan historians and even 19th-century British cartographers all concur regarding the site and its location.

Prior to the Palestinian takeover in October 2000, the tomb's compound was host to a yeshiva, and it was visited by thousands of Jewish worshipers annually. Indeed, in recent months, with the IDF again operating in Nablus, there have been a number of unauthorized attempts made by Jews to reach the site and pray there, often at immense personal risk. Whatever one thinks of the wisdom of such efforts, the fact is that they seem to have worked: this past Saturday night, for the first time in two years, the army officially permitted some 100 Jews to visit the tomb and hold services there.

While that is a step in the right direction, it is hardly enough. The time has come for Israel to take back Joseph's Tomb once and for all.

To leave the site in Palestinian hands would be to reward mob violence. After 24 months of suicide bombings, shootings, stonings and mortar attacks, it is essential that the "original sin" of ditching Joseph's Tomb be corrected forthwith. Such a step would send a clear and unequivocal message to the Palestinians that nothing -- absolutely nothing -- will be gained from their resort to carnage and bloodshed.

Last week, the cabinet wisely decided to include Rachel's Tomb, outside Bethlehem, within the boundaries of the security zone to be constructed around Jerusalem. There is no reason for Joseph, Rachel's beloved son, to be left behind

either.

Twice in Jewish history, Joseph was forsaken by his brothers and handed over to foreigners. The first time was in the biblical story, when he was tossed into a pit and sold to traveling merchants. The second time was in October 2000, when his tomb was surrendered to a crazed horde of Palestinian rioters.

Now, with the IDF active in the territories, we have a chance to right that historic wrong. And right it we must, because Joseph should not be abandoned yet again. (Jerusalem Post Sep 18)

Mea Culpa By Berel Wein

In this season of introspection and repentance before Yom Kippur, it is important to recall that Maimonides lists the order of events that lead to repentance and self-improvement.

The first and most basic of these is true regret for past errors and sins. This regret must be expressed in words from one's mouth. It is insufficient to merely feel sorry about how things turned out. The mind and the heart may recognize the mistakes that the person made. But as long as that recognition remains bottled up within the person, the regret is not deemed to be sufficiently sincere to allow for forgiveness. It must be expressed - confessed - verbally.

We all know how difficult it is to admit error. We are able to rationalize almost any wrong that we have committed. But without the cleansing effect of admitting verbally that one has sinned, that one has been wrong, there is no way to proceed to the later steps necessary for forgiveness and improvement. This is true regarding personal issues and individual behavior. But it is just as true and just as vital regarding national issues and applies to national political personalities as well.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres can save his reputation only by admitting that Oslo was a mistake. Stating, as he amazingly did last week, that Oslo was correct and that somehow successive Israeli governments didn't execute those agreements and ideas correctly, is the height of folly. I don't know whether Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat is truly irrelevant yet, but if Peres and the diehard Left keep on insisting that Oslo was the greatest of achievements and that no errors were ever made regarding the principles of Oslo itself but only somehow in its execution, then they are, in my opinion, truly irrelevant.

There may have definitely been only good intentions on the part of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and Peres in agreeing to Oslo. But many a mistake is based on good intentions. Owning up to the mistake is an act of statesmanship. Keeping on justifying it is very craven behavior.

Another step in the process of repentance is the acceptance of the commitment not to repeat the previous mistake, the habitual sin. It is obvious that this level can never be reached if one refuses to admit that a mistake or a sin was, in fact, ever committed.

It is not clear at all what type of settlement, if any, is possible with the Palestinians in the near future. Certainly the present corrupt leadership inspires no confidence in the reaching of any sort of agreement to soon end the violence and the terrorism.

Repeating the mistakes of Oslo - not demanding the enforcement of the Palestinian commitments, trusting Arafat in the face of the facts, ignoring the type of education that Palestinian children receive regarding Israel and violence, etc. - should be unthinkable to any Israeli government. And just because we cannot discern any good policy that could quickly extricate us from the current situation, this does not justify reinstating the bad policies that have brought us to this pass. If those who style themselves to be the "peace camp" have a new, alternative plan to reach the goal of a secure peace, I, for one, would be desperately interested in hearing it.

Reviving Oslo is no plan. It is simply a repetition of folly and naivete. And I know of no fence in history that has, in the long run, been successful in keeping out people determined to kill and maim.

The ultimate test of repentance as outlined by Maimonides is to be placed in the same situation where earlier one erred and this time behave wisely and correctly. In Maimonides's golden words, "The Creator Himself will be able to then testify that true repentance has occurred."

In life, both personal and national, it is very difficult to recreate a given situation. Nevertheless, even if the situation is not able to be repeated exactly, it can be recreated in a general fashion. And that general situation still exists today and we therefore have to be strong and wise enough never to repeat our past errors.

If the Lord will be able to testify about us that true repentance has occurred, then we can hope for better times in the future. But this type of repentance, again both personal and national, is not in God's hands. It is within our mouths, our hearts, our hands to achieve this type of repentance. Yom Kippur is a good time to begin this process. (Jerusalem Post Sep 18) *Rabbi Wein, a resident of Jerusalem, will be the guest speaker for the first annual Rebbetzin Judy Taub z"l Memorial Lecture at BAYT on October 15th.*