

trips to Moscow by Cook, Robertson, and then Blair. "With the U.S. focussed on its Presidential elections," Truscott wrote, "Tony Blair is best placed amongst the heads of EU [European Union] member governments to build a personal relationship with Putin."

Commenting on this, a knowledgeable Russian source told *EIR* that there is the definite possibility of Britain and Russia forming such a new Entente Cordiale. British foreign policy is now at a critical juncture, he explained, since relations with the European continent are not good, and there are certain "ill feelings" between Britain and the United States. Under these conditions, leading British strategists are thinking in terms of a "special relationship between Russia and Britain."

There are several factors in this, he noted. One, is that there have been good relations between Russia and the "London Club" of creditors. Second, Putin has promised to create a good climate for "British investment in Russia, particularly in the sectors of oil and gas. In Russia, we need \$5-10 billion in investments, to renew the oil industry. Within four to five years, those British firms investing, will receive good dividends."

'Russia 2000'

Indicative of what may be in the works, is a major conference on the topic of "Russia 2000: A New Reality," which is planned to be held at the Queen Elizabeth Conference Center in London, on April 19-20 — right after Putin's trip to Britain. The conference is being organized by the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce, a channel of British influence into Russia dating back to 1916. Its patron is Prince Michael of Kent, a first cousin to the Queen. The conference is also being sponsored by the British telecommunications firm Cable & Wireless, and the London *Financial Times*.

Speakers from the Russian side will include former Prime Minister and Gazprom chieftain Viktor Chernomyrdin; "free market" privatization fanatic Anatoli Chubais, now prominent in the Russian energy industry; Alfa Bank head Pyotr Aven, who told the London *Guardian* recently that Putin would become a "Russian Pinochet"; and loudmouth Vladimir Zhirinovskiy.

British speakers will be representing BP-Amoco, Salomon Smith Barney, and other leading firms in the financial and energy sector. The sponsors are now claiming that 600 people will attend.

As background on the affinity between the Russian "reformers" and circles in Britain, the reader should consult Jonathan Tennenbaum's article on the "national liberals" trying to kidnap Russian economic policy, in the April 7 *EIR* (p. 42). It is notable that a number of the "reformers" now promoting the "Pinochet option" for Russia, were members of the group who were trained at the knee of Lord Harris of Highcross during the late 1980s, in Mont Pelerin Society-style radical free-market economics.

Pope brings message of peace to Holy Land

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Pope John Paul II's pilgrimage to the Holy Land on March 20-26, encompassing Jordan, Israel, and Palestine, is of a spiritual nature, the fulfillment of a life-long desire by the Pope, to visit the sites where Christ was conceived, born, lived, died, and was resurrected. But, precisely because the Pope has marked the second millennium since the birth of Christ, with a spiritual pilgrimage, he has raised the level of deliberation between Israelis and Arabs, to a higher moral and philosophical plane, redefining the parameters of the peace process.

The central theme of the Pope's pilgrimage, which formally began on Feb. 24-26 in Egypt, and included a trip to Mount Sinai, is the continuity of the three great monotheistic religions, unfolding historically from Abraham, through Moses, and culminating in the fulfillment of the Covenant and the Law, in the mission of Jesus Christ. The Pope thus elaborated the notion, first expressed in his visit to the Rome synagogue in 1986, that Judaism represents the "elder brother" of Christianity. By emphasizing the primacy of love in the relationship between God and man, and the dignity of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God, the Pope established this as a principle in the ecumenical dialogue among the three Abrahamic religions, which, in turn, should be an ideal and moral framework for social, political, and economic relations among the nations and peoples of these religious traditions. On this basis, peace is possible. And on this basis, his interlocutors understood the significance of his mission.

Visit in Jordan

In Amman, tens of thousands of Jordanians filled the streets to greet him, and over 30,000 filled the stadium to participate in the mass, including large numbers of Iraqi Christians who live in Jordan. At the mass, 2,000 Jordanian children, symbolizing the 2,000 years since Christ was born, were to receive their first communion from the 15 bishops who con-celebrated the mass with the Pope. His visit was also welcomed by Muslim leaders, including the head of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Jordan's King Abdullah warmly greeted the Pope as he arrived in Amman on March 20, telling him, "Your presence reinforces our determination to seek peace. It is a call for those believers in peace not to lose hope," and welcomed him

as “a man of peace . . . a symbol of all that is pure and noble in this life . . . a true reminder that the power of love is much stronger than conflict and hatred . . . as a fellow believer in God, the Compassionate and the Merciful.”

Referring to the peace process, King Abdullah continued that the visit “brings the hope of a brighter future to those who have known nothing but the misery of the past. Hope for the Palestinians who yearn for justice and stability, a promise for the Israelis of security and acceptance, comfort for the Lebanese of a better tomorrow, and hope for the Syrians that the sad chapter of war is finally over.”

He added, “It is also a prayer for our Iraqi brothers and sisters for a new brighter day to finally dawn upon them.”

The Pope responded, by encouraging the King to continue pursuing peace and ecumenical dialogue: “In this area of the world, there are grave and urgent issues of justice, of the rights of peoples and nations, which have to be resolved for the good of all concerned and as a condition for lasting peace. No matter how difficult, no matter how long, the process of seeking peace must continue. Without peace, there can be no authentic development for this region, no better life for its peoples, no brighter future for its children. That is why Jordan’s proven commitment to securing the conditions necessary for peace is so important and praiseworthy. . . .

“Building a future of peace requires an ever more mature understanding and ever more practical cooperation among the peoples who acknowledge the one true, indivisible God, the Creator of all that exists. The three historical monotheistic religions count peace, goodness, and respect for the human person among their highest values.” John Paul said he hoped his visit would “strengthen the already fruitful Christian-Muslim dialogue which is being conducted in Jordan, particularly through the Royal Interfaith Institute.”

The first holy site on his pilgrimage in Jordan, was the fourth-century monastery on Mount Nebo, the site where Moses first glimpsed the Promised Land. “Here on the heights of Mount Nebo, I begin this stage of my Jubilee Pilgrimage,” said the Pope. “I think of the great figure of Moses and the new Covenant with God made with him on Mount Sinai. I give thanks to God for the ineffable gift of Jesus Christ, who sealed the Covenant with his blood and brought the Law to fulfillment. To him who is ‘the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end’ (Rev. 22:13), to him I dedicate every step of this journey which I make through the land which was his.”

‘Pedagogy of love’

Later, in his homily during mass at the Amman stadium, John Paul II spoke of salvation history, from Abraham, through Moses, to John the Baptist, and Christ, emphasizing that the promise God made to Abraham, which brought him the blessing of family and land, “was sealed when God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. What passed between Moses and God . . . shaped the subsequent history of salvation as a *Covenant of love between God and man*—a Covenant which de-

mands obedience but promises liberation.” The Ten Commandments, he said, “etched in stone on Sinai—but written on the human heart since the beginning of creation—are the divine pedagogy of love. . . .” The Law and the Covenant, he said, had to be defended repeatedly in history by prophets, some of whom, like John the Baptist, “paid with their blood.” It was in Christ, baptized by John, that “the promise made to Abraham and the Law given to Moses are fulfilled.” Christ is “the realization of the promise . . . the fulfillment of the Law. The Risen Christ alone reveals the full meaning of all that happened at the Red Sea and Mount Sinai” (all emphases in original).

Arriving in Tel Aviv, Israel on March 21, John Paul II said, “Yesterday, from the heights of Mount Nebo I looked across the Jordan Valley to this blessed land. Today, it is with profound emotion that I set foot in the Land where God chose to ‘pitch his tent’ . . . and made it possible for for man to encounter him more directly.”

Greeting Israeli President Ezer Weizman, and “all the people of the State of Israel,” the Pontiff described his pilgrimage: “Along every step of the way, I am moved by a vivid sense of God who has gone before us and leads us on, who wants us to honor him in spirit and in truth, to acknowledge the differences between us, but also to recognize in every human being the image and likeness of the One Creator of heaven and earth.” He praised President Weizman as a “man of peace and a peacemaker,” adding, “We all know how urgent is the need for peace and justice, not only for Israel but for the entire region.” Citing the positive developments in relations between Israel and the Vatican, since Pope Paul VI’s 1964 visit, John Paul II continued, “With new-found openness towards one another, Christians and Jews together must make courageous efforts to remove all forms of prejudice. We must strive always and everywhere to present the true face of the Jews and Judaism,, as likewise of Christians and Christianity.” He concluded, with an appeal for the interreligious dialogue among Judaism, Christianity and Islam, to work for peace and justice.

The status of Jerusalem

The Pope’s commitment to establishing an elevated spiritual basis for dialogue to lead to peace, did not exclude his facing very concrete and controversial issues related to the peace process. These included the issue of Jerusalem, and of the Palestinian state.

Israel maintains that Jerusalem, which it occupied in the June 1967 war and annexed, is the undivided eternal capital of Israel. For the Palestinians, and Arab world more broadly, Arab East Jerusalem is the location of holy sites in Islam, and Jerusalem is desired as the capital of a future Palestinian state. For the Vatican, Jerusalem, precisely because of its unique character as the site of places holy to all three monotheistic religions, must have a special status, as an international city. In 1984, John Paul II wrote an Apostolic Letter, *Redemptiois Anno*, which declared the city to be “sacred patrimony of all

believers and desired crossroad of peace for the peoples of the Middle East.” In the 1993 treaty between Israel and the Holy See, which established diplomatic relations for the first time, the Jerusalem issue was excluded. In the Israeli-Palestinian talks, Jerusalem has been placed on the agenda of the final status talks, and is one of the thorniest issues to be dealt with. As recently as March, the Palestinian Authority and the Vatican sealed an agreement on the preservation and defense of Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, which encountered Israeli criticism, as it implied that the Church would endorse a Palestinian state.

When the Pope arrived in Tel Aviv, he was greeted by the Israeli government and state authorities as well as by religious leaders. Whereas Prime Minister Ehud Barak chose to greet him with a “Welcome to the Holy Land,” both President Weizman and the religious leaders, reasserted Israel’s claim to Jerusalem as its capital. Weizman referred to it as, “the city of peace, the capital of the State of Israel, the heart of the Jewish world. . . . the city that has been reunified . . . the city of the judges of Israel, the kings of Israel, and the prophets of Israel, the capital and the source of pride of the State of Israel.” He also stressed Israel’s commitment to protect and guarantee access to all the holy places there. The greetings of the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau and Sephardi Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, also stated that Jerusalem was the capital of Israel. Both Weizman and the rabbis, also lauded the Pope for having acted for reconciliation between the Church and the Jewish people, specifically commending his having expressed contrition for acts of prejudice and anti-Semitism by Christians. John Paul did not address the status of Jerusalem in his remarks when he arrived.

Palestine, ancient and modern

From Tel Aviv, he proceeded to Bethlehem, where he celebrated mass at Manger Square outside the Church of the Nativity. At the welcoming ceremony in Bethlehem, the Pope said that this, the birthplace of Christ, is “the source of the joy, the hope, the goodwill, which for two millennia have filled countless human hearts at the very sound of the name, ‘Bethlehem.’ ” The message of Bethlehem is “the good news of reconciliation among men, of peace at every level of relations between individuals and nations. Bethlehem is a universal crossroads where all peoples can meet to build together a world worthy of our human dignity and destiny.”

Turning to his host, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, the Pope addressed the plight of the Palestinian people: “No one can ignore how much the Palestinian people have had to suffer in recent decades. Your torment is before the eyes of the world. And it has gone on too long.” He went on, in effect, to declare his support for a sovereign state: “The Holy See has always recognized that the Palestinian people have the natural right to a homeland, and the right to be able to live in peace and tranquillity with the other peoples of this area.” And, “In the international forum, my predecessors and I have repeatedly proclaimed that there would be no end to



Pope John Paul II

the sad conflict in the Holy Land without stable guarantees for the rights of all the peoples involved, on the basis of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions and declarations.”

Included in the Holy Father’s itinerary was a visit to a Palestinian refugee camp, where he urged, “My hope is that my visit today to the Dheisheh Refugee Camp will serve to remind the international community that decisive action is needed to improve the situation of the Palestinian people.” Saying he had “felt close to the Palestinian people in their sufferings” throughout his pontificate, John Paul II had compassionate words for their loss of basic needs of the human person, not only material possessions “but your freedom, the closeness of your relatives, and the familiar surroundings and cultural traditions which nourished your personal and family life.” Thus, the urgency of a solution, to overcome this degrading situation, a solution, he stated, which could come only when political leaders are “inspired by a higher vision of politics as service of the common good.” And he concluded, again saying, peace would come “only when the dignity and rights of all human beings made in the image of God are acknowledged and respected.”

On March 25, The Feast of the Annunciation, the Pope visited Nazareth, where the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary, that she would become the mother of

God. As in his other speeches, the Pope stressed the continuity between the Old and New Testaments, by comparing Abraham and Mary, who had both received a wonderful promise from God, something utterly unexpected and unprecedented.

Jerusalem, the Holy City

But it was in Jerusalem, the Holy City, where he ended his pilgrimage, that the high-point of the Pope's visit was reached. Here, the Pope retraced the steps of Jesus, to the Mount of the Beatitudes, where Christ delivered the Sermon on the Mount, to the Chapel of Cenacle, marking the Last Supper, and to the site traditionally identified as the place where Christ was buried, now in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In each case, John Paul II reiterated the common thread that links the history of Judaism to that of Christianity, its fulfillment: In the Cenacle, Christ had celebrated the Passover meal, with bread and wine that he blessed for his Apostles. "But Christ, the Priest of the new and eternal Covenant, used these words to proclaim the saving mystery of his Passion and Death. Under the appearances of bread and wine, he instituted the sacramental signs of the Sacrifice of his Body and Blood."

On the Mount of the Beatitudes, the Pope again drew the Old Testament lesson to its New Testament fulfillment, referring to his February pilgrimage to Mount Sinai in Egypt. Comparing the Ten Commandments to Christ's Sermon on the Mount, he said that the Ten Commandments "may seem negative" in their formulation, but "in fact they are supremely positive. . . . Moving beyond the evil they name, they point the way to the *law of love* which is the first and greatest of the commandments: 'You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind. . . . You will love your neighbor as yourself.' " The Pope recalled Christ's Sermon on the Mount, in which he blessed the weak, the poor, the pure in heart, the persecuted. Speaking to 50,000 young people, the Pope acknowledged the contrary voice that tells youth, that it is the violent, the proud, the merciless, who are blessed. This choice between good and evil, he said, is the choice Christ posed in his Sermon, and which, he said, the younger generation today must face, for the new century.

Celebrating mass in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Pope returned to this theme: "The tomb is empty. It is a silent witness to the central event of human history: the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. For almost two thousand years the empty tomb has borne witness to the victory of Life over death." This, the resurrection, he said, "is the definitive seal of all God's promises, the birthplace of a new, risen humanity, the pledge of a history marked by the Messianic gifts of peace and spiritual joy." And, at the dawn of the new millennium, Christians "can and ought to look to the future with steadfast trust."

Jerusalem signalled, as well, the high-point in the Pope's

ecumenical mission, in particular, his historic commitment to effect full reconciliation between Jews and Christians, between Judaism and Christianity, a process he began with his Rome meeting with the Jewish community in 1986, his overseeing the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1994, and his more recent expression of contrition for the actions of Christians against Jews, in history. Visiting the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum, which commemorates the victims of the Nazi persecutions of the Jews, the Pope said, "In this place of memories, the mind and heart and soul feel an extreme need for silence. Silence in which to remember. Silence in which to try to make some sense of the memories which come flooding back. Silence because there are no words strong enough to deplore the terrible tragedy of the *Shoah*. My own personal memories," he said, "are of all that happened when the Nazis occupied Poland during the war. I remember my Jewish friends and neighbors, some of whom perished, while others survived." At the time, it was the young Father Karol Wojtyła, who had intervened to provide comfort to those, some who survived.

"How could man have such utter contempt for man?" asked the Pontiff. "Because he had reached the point of contempt for God. Only a Godless ideology could plan and carry out the extermination of a whole people. . . . Jews and Christians share an immense spiritual patrimony flowing from God's self-revelation. Our religious teachings and our spiritual experience demand that we overcome evil with good." And he issued a solemn pledge: "As Bishop of Rome and Successor of the Apostle Peter, I assure the Jewish people that the Catholic Church, motivated by the Gospel law of truth and love and by no political considerations, is deeply saddened by the hatred, acts of persecution and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews by Christians at any time and in any place. The Church rejects racism in any form as a denial of the image of the Creator inherent in every human being (cf. Gen. 1:26)." He concluded with the prayer that Christians and Jews work together to eliminate any mutual animosity, and rather express the "mutual respect required of those who adore the one Creator and Lord, and look to Abraham as our common father in faith."

During his visit to the Western Wall, the remains of the Temple in Jerusalem, in compliance with Jewish tradition, he placed a prayer in the cracks of the wall. The prayer, now on display at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, read: "God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring Your name to the nations. . . . We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of Yours to suffer and, asking Your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant."

Following his visit to the Western Wall, the Pope visited the Al Aqsa mosque on the Temple Mount, where he met with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Ikrima Sabri.