

## The Six Day War – 40 Years On

### *Thought for the Day*

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Already this month we've had not one but three fortieth anniversaries – the Abortion Act, the Six Day War, and the release of Sgt Pepper. It's as if – though we didn't know it at the time – somehow the world changed radically in a single week in 1967.

It's commonly said – no longer very originally – that if you can remember the 60s, you weren't really there, but I certainly remember some things from 40 years ago. For one, I'd just finished my Highers but still had other exams to sit – no wonder Leonard Cohen, not the Beatles, was my revision music of choice!

This was also when I became a news junkie, my concentration interrupted by hourly fixes on the growing crisis as Egypt and Syria massed troops on their borders with Israel. I felt a personal connection – like most Jewish people I had family in Israel, since those few lucky enough to escape or survive the Nazis settled wherever they found refuge. Visiting as a child, I had been refused entry to East Jerusalem and its holy sites by Jordanian soldiers, so I shared the relief of Israel's stunning victory, and exhilaration that the city was again open to all.

The following summer I toured the West Bank, and heard from shopkeepers and village elders how they welcomed the Israelis as liberators from two decades of Jordanian occupation. But that's when the law of missed opportunities and unintended consequences kicked in. Attitudes hardened, and perhaps Abba Eban's quip that Arafat never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity could apply to both sides.

40 years of bloodshed later, one thing is certain – there is increasing weariness everywhere with the perpetual attrition. The Arab League has a plan, the US has a road-map, and the EU has a quartet! On Thursday the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian President will meet. It's too much to hope that they will beat their swords into ploughshares on the spot, but we can at least pray that they find the statesmanship to begin the process.

*Ephraim Borowski*

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