

Editorial

In Honor of Yitzhak Rabin

We would do well to reflect on the mission of that deceased Israeli patriot, Yitzhak Rabin, on this 8th anniversary of his assassination on Nov. 4, 1995. There are hopeful signs, at this very moment, that his brave attempt to conclude peace with the Palestinians is being taken up again, through the action of Israeli Yossi Beilin, and Palestinian Yassir Abd Rabbo, in forming the Geneva Initiative. All the more reason for us to turn our attention to the life and thought of Rabin.

Yitzhak Rabin was no “peacenik.” He had fought for the independence of Israel from Great Britain in 1947-48, and played a commanding role in the 1967 war. During his tenure as prime minister, between 1984 and 1988, the Israeli government fought bitterly against the Palestinian Intifada; and over those years and those that followed, he showed no sign of softening toward the recognition of a Palestinian state.

Yet in 1993, Rabin braved the wrath of the fanatics of his country, among others, in order to forge the Oslo Accords with the Palestinian Authority, and sign a treaty with Yassir Arafat. His words at the signing ceremony, held under the eyes of President Clinton, deserve to be etched in our memories: “Let me say to you, the Palestinians, we are destined to live together on the same soil in the same land. We, the soldiers who have returned from battles stained with blood; we who have seen our relatives and friends killed before our eyes; we who have attended their funerals and cannot look into the eyes of their parents; we who have come from a land where parents bury their children; we who have fought against you, the Palestinians; we say to you today in a loud and a clear voice, enough of blood and tears. Enough!

“We have no desire for revenge, we harbor no hatred towards you. We, like you, are people—people who want to build a home, to plant a tree, to love, live side by side with you in dignity, in affinity, as human beings, as free men. We are today giving peace a chance and saying to you, and saying *again* to you, ‘Enough.’ Let us pray that a day will come when we all will say farewell to arms. We wish to open a new chapter in the sad

book of our lives together, a chapter of mutual recognition, of good neighborliness, of mutual respect, of understanding. We hope to embark on a new era in the history of the Middle East.”

Two years later, when Oslo was under increased assault by those he called the Israeli “ayatollahs,” Rabin encapsulated his thoughts on the change that was required to reach a peace. In a toast to President Clinton and King Hussein at the conclusion of the negotiations on Middle East peace on July 25, 1995, Rabin said: “If I raise my toast, I will raise it for those who have the courage to change axioms, to overcome prejudices, to change realities, and those who make it possible to them—for you, Your Majesty (King Hussein of Jordan); to you, President Clinton; to all those who believe and support and are ready to assist the continuation of peace in the region. Le Chaim. Le Chaim.”

Less than four months later, Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish fanatic—one of a group that had been funded from the United States, and supported by Likud fascists such as Benjamin Netanyahu—in a shockingly open fashion. That murder, combined with the deadly refusal of the international community to provide the support for the urgently required joint economic development projects which could have cemented the peace between Israeli and Palestinian, put Israel on the road to the kind of mayhem it is suffering today. Precisely because no other leaders have stepped forward in Israel, to “change axioms” toward collaboration with the Palestinians.

Today, there is hope that Rabin’s dream is being revived, with international support and promise. Not only the politicians, but leading military men in Israel are coming forward to reject the policy of revenge, and perpetual war, which replaced Rabin’s policy of peace. This is an occasion for hope and joy.

What’s remains to be provided, is the strong international support, particularly from the United States, for the outlook Israel’s great statesman embodied. As we commemorate Yitzhak Rabin, let us commit ourselves to establishing his “peace of the brave” once again.