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The Legacy of Yitzhak Rabin

Which direction for Israel in the wake of his assassination?

Yitzhak Rabin was an Israeli patriot and military hero. His assassination was an almost intolerable blow to his country, to Jews in Israel and in the United States, and to people all over the world. Now that the first shock has passed, it may be time to assess his legacy.

What are the facts?

Background of the "peace process": Rabin's party, the Labor Party, was elected primarily on the strength of its leader's promise to end the intifada (the Arab uprising) within six months of his assuming the government. He did also promise that he would never negotiate with the PLO; that he would not yield sovereignty over the Israeli heartland of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"); that he would not allow a Palestinian state to be created in the "West Bank" and Gaza; that he would never yield the Golan Heights to Syria; and that Jerusalem would forever remain the undivided capital of the state of Israel. But, unbeknownst to him, his foreign minister, Shimon Peres, and his staff were secretly negotiating with the PLO.

These discussions culminated in the so-called "Declaration of Principles" and that historical handshake in Washington.

With obvious misgivings, Prime Minister

Rabin proceeded with the implementation of this "peace process". Having spent most of his life in his country's military service, he was well aware of the strategic importance of the "West Bank". It can be assumed that, whatever the pressures, he would never have given up military control over that area nor of the Golan Heights.

Things changed with Mr. Rabin's assassination. Shimon Peres, who had orchestrated the secret negotiations with the PLO, is now prime minister. Unfortunately, he is pursuing a much more heedless approach to the "peace process". There is now little question that full control over the "West Bank" will be transferred to the PLO, to Arafat and to his 30,000 soldiers (disguised as policemen), and that a Palestinian state will come into existence in the "West Bank" and in Gaza; that the Golan will be handed over to Syria in exchange for vague promises; and that Jerusalem, will be divided, with the western half being the capital of a diminished and vulnerable Israel and the eastern half the capital of the new Palestinian state. There now seems to be a headlong rush into

"peace at any price", without proper consideration for Israel's security interests and ultimately for its survival.

Life-and-death decisions without a mandate:

The "peace process" was initiated by Prime Minister Menachem Begin, leader of the opposition Likud Party, who signed the Camp David accord with Egypt. He had solid popular and Knesset support. But now, the Knesset majority of the Labor Party is paper-thin: 61/59. It is on the basis of this minimal majority that Mr. Peres now arrogates to himself the power of decision to change the borders of and to truncate his country. A clear mandate, a super-majority in parliament or in a plebiscite should be required to make such life-and-death decisions. Of the 61 votes in favor of the government, five belong to Arab parties. Especially since the

Labor Party elevated the PLO terror organization to respectability, Israeli Arabs—mostly disaffected in any case—do not identify with and do not promote the interests of

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Israel, the Jewish state. They identify with and promote the interests of the hoped-for Palestinian state. It is clear that, before too long, the Israeli Arabs, who are concentrated in Galilee, will demand severance from Israel and "Anschluss" to the new state of Palestine, thus further carving up Israel and contributing to its strategic disadvantage. If, as seems now to be foreordained, Mr. Peres will yield the Golan to Syria, and with the "West Bank" in hostile Arab hands, Israel will be mortally weakened and virtually indefensible. The declared aim of the PLO, clearly stated in its covenant and never rescinded, is the destruction of Israel. The Arabs have recognized that, at least at present, that cannot be done by military means. The strategy, therefore, is the destruction of Israel in stages—first, by creating a Palestinian state in any territory that can be taken over through Israeli acquiescence, and then to foment an all-out assault against the critically vulnerable Jewish state. The policies of the current Israeli government seem to have made that goal more attainable.

The deluded fool who assassinated Yitzhak Rabin has accomplished the exact opposite of what he had intended. After having suffered more Arab terror casualties since the handshake than in any comparable period, it seemed pretty clear that the Israeli public had become disenchanted with the "peace process" and that the Labor government would be defeated in the elections scheduled for the end of this year. Because of Rabin's martyrdom, it is now quite possible that another Labor government will be elected and that the "peace process" will be continued, with the fateful results it may entail for Israel. One can only hope that Israelis, in homage to the slain premier, will take a very hard look at the flawed policies of Shimon Peres and at the "peace process" and its almost inevitable consequences, before it is too late.

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