

Editorial

On the question of leadership

The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was an outrageous criminal act. At the least, it should hopefully strengthen the resolve of those in power, to move decisively against British sponsorship of the use of terrorism as a form of irregular warfare. Even from the tragedy of Rabin's death, good can come.

Rabin's death was a tragedy, but his life was not. He was a statesman who served his nation well; but he served us all at the end of his life. Born in 1922 in Jerusalem, he had an impressive career as a military specialist.

Rabin was no *peacenik*, but, rather, he was known as a hard-liner on the Arab question. Yet, he had come to the point in his life at which he realized that the policy of the mailed fist, which had been pursued by Israel with his full support, had been wrong, or at least was no longer correct. His greatness lay in the fact that he recognized this before it was too late, and was willing to act on that recognition. Fully cognizant of the climate for assassination that was being generated against him by the extremist wing of the Zionist movement, his resolve proved unshakable. Thus, he demonstrated his stature, both as an Israeli patriot and a world leader.

Peace is *the* strategic option for the future of Israel. On the basis of his hard-nosed, statesmanlike understanding of this, Rabin acted. He changed his policy for the benefit of his country, as a true patriot often does. And he did so with full knowledge of the threat to his life. It was this quality of the man which was especially noted by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and President Bill Clinton, both of whom had an intimate association with Rabin in the last period of his life.

On Nov. 5, the day after the assassination, Arafat, in an interview with CNN, mourned the loss of the man whom he called "one of the most important religious men in Israel." Describing the murdered Israeli prime minister as his partner, with whom he was engaged in the peace process, Arafat said that together, they were making "the peace of the brave. . . . So this loss is not

only a loss for the Israelis and the Palestinians, but the whole world."

We are reminded of a similar crucial partnership in the post-World War II period, between German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and French President Charles de Gaulle, a partnership which embraced President John F. Kennedy as well. Like Rabin, Kennedy, too, was assassinated, and attempts were made on the life of de Gaulle, as they have been most recently on President Clinton.

In his address at Rabin's funeral, President Clinton spoke from his heart when he said, "Every moment we shared was a joy, because he was a good man, and an inspiration, because he was also a great man."

Clinton expressed his determination to further the effort for which Rabin gave his life, affirming, "Now it falls to all of us who love peace, and all of us who loved him, to carry on the struggle to which he gave life, and for which he gave his life."

President Clinton pointed to the parallel between the assassination of the Israeli prime minister and the list of Americans also victim to the same evil forces, saying, "I ask you, the people of Israel, on behalf of my nation that knows its own long litany of loss, from Abraham Lincoln to President Kennedy, to Martin Luther King, to . . . stay the righteous course. As Moses said to the children of Israel, when he knew he would not cross over into the Promised Land, be strong and of good courage, fear not, for God will go with you. He will not fail you. He will not forsake you."

It is incumbent not only on those given a unique opportunity for world leadership, but on all of us to take upon ourselves the same responsibility for defeating evil and working toward a just peace for all men. This is the heritage of Rabin, Lincoln, Kennedy, and King. Yitzhak Rabin's contribution as a *world leader* will stand, unchallengeable. But it is up to us, to see that the forces which took away his life, have not robbed him or us of the victory of the peace for which he gave his life.