

TRIBUTE TO YITZHAK RABIN

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, before the events of the last few days fade from memory, and the recollection of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin gets obscured by other events in the world, I want to take this opportunity to reflect somewhat on my visit there during the funeral and just to discuss, for a moment, my view of this man, this great man, someone I knew very well for a period of more than 25 years.

Mr. President, the world now knows so well that the Israeli people have lost a courageous, visionary leader, and the world has lost a peacemaker. As Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was laid to rest on Monday in the holy city of his birth, Jerusalem, millions witnessed the funeral and grieved at the loss. His brutal assassination represents the worst of so many tragedies in Israel's recent history. It demonstrated too vividly the depths to which intolerance can drag the human spirit. The people of Israel are in shock, stunned and saddened by the senseless, cold-blooded murder of their unique leader, soldier turned peacemaker.

Many felt the pain of the bullet that took away their Prime Minister, and that the assassin tore asunder at the same moment the spirit and the soul of Israel. The residents of the community, and those that know the Jewish people, cannot comprehend how one Jew could kill another in the name of God, when all, at times, have been victims.

I, along with millions of Americans, share their grief and sense of loss. At this delicate time in Israel's history, the United States Government must remain unequivocal in showing its strong support for the Government of Israel and in its leader, acting Prime Minister Peres, as the head of the Government. He has the credentials to ably lead the people of Israel in the tumultuous days ahead. The United States commitment to Israel will remain strong. It cannot be shattered by an assassin's bullet.

Mr. President, during the decades in which Yitzhak Rabin faithfully served his government, the American people observed, with great admiration, his evolution from soldier to statesman to politician to peacemaker. Always, he had our respect as an outstanding leader.

Yitzhak Rabin was a man of great courage and determination. His concern, to his last moments, was for the security of the people of Israel and the attainment of peace. Though his life was cut short by the bullet of an intolerant, self-righteous assassin, his legacy of peace will live on with his countrymen in future generations of Israeli citizens. In his memory, I believe that the peace process will continue to move forward at, perhaps, an even faster pace. Because the Jewish extremists took up arms against the peace process, Israel must not be dissuaded from pursuing and strengthening regional peace. To abandon the process now

would give succor to the extremists and terrorists of all religious persuasion.

Because Rabin was a man of such character and courage and so deeply committed to peace, dignitaries and government officials from 80 different nations came to his funeral in Israel to pay him their last respects. Five thousand guests were invited from all around the world. President Clinton and former Presidents Bush and Carter attended the funeral, along with Secretary of State Christopher and former Secretaries Vance and Shultz. Thirty-five Members of Congress attended.

Heads of State, Cabinet Ministers, and government officials from the international community traveled to Jerusalem to mourn the loss of this great leader, many of whom did not really know him but knew about him, read about him, heard about him, and saw his commitment—unyielding commitment—to his people to show support for continuation of the peace process.

The global gathering at his funeral was testament to the fact that under Rabin's leadership Israel had been welcomed into the international family of nations as never before. Nowhere was his accomplishment in ushering in a new era of acceptance for his country more evident than in the reputation from Middle Eastern countries.

Never in their wildest dreams could people imagine that Jordan's King Hussein would stand in Jerusalem, the city where his grandfather was assassinated—which he mentioned in his comments—in 1951 by Islamic militants, people in his own religion, his own communities, the city that was reunified by Israel in 1967. He came to say farewell to his former foe, Yitzhak Rabin calling him a brother—a brother, a colleague, and a friend. I saw him wiping tears from his eyes.

Never did I imagine that the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, who had traveled to Jerusalem to pay Prime Minister Rabin his last respects—even dignitaries from countries like Oman and Qatar, which have no diplomatic relations with Israel, came, beyond their formalities, to cross the border to say farewell to this visionary leader.

I, too, Mr. President, was at the funeral on Mt. Herzl where so many of Israel's military and spiritual leaders are buried. As the siren sounded throughout the country announcing a 2-minute period of silence and mourning for his death, I recalled many of the heroic moments of Yitzhak Rabin's life.

I saw the flag of Israel draped over his coffin and envisioned Soldier Rabin leading the fight to keep the supply link between Jerusalem and the sea in the war of independence. We traveled that road from the airport to Jerusalem where along the roadbed still were the hulk of trucks and tanks and weapons that are left there as a reminder of what the price was that was

paid to keep that road open and to create the independent State of Israel.

I remembered reading about his exploits and how heroic this very young man at the time was. He was a brigade commander still in his early twenties.

I envisioned Army Chief of Staff Rabin strategizing for a strong United States-Israel relationship from his Embassy office in Washington. I could almost sense Minister of Defense, twice Prime Minister, Rabin's steely determination in defending the security of the people that he loved so dearly, the people of Israel.

Mostly, however, I recalled the day that Prime Minister Rabin did the inconceivable and made peace with enemies. I recalled sitting on the lawn of the White House and how still the world was as he shook hands with Chairman Arafat after signing the Declaration of Principles, then the day that he and King Hussein of Jordan did the same, in the same location, after making peace.

Those are handshakes of courage and of bravery, of hope for attaining, at long last, safety and security through peace as opposed to security with weapons.

History will say that Yitzhak Rabin, who fought in so many of Israel's wars, gave his life for peace, a task to which he devoted himself completely. It is appropriate, therefore, that his last words were of peace.

I was a military man for 27 years. I waged war as long as there was no chance for peace. I believe there is now a chance for peace, a great chance, and we must take advantage of it for those who are standing here, and for those who are not here—and they are many. I have always believed that the majority of the people want peace and are ready to take a chance for peace. Violence erodes the basis of Israeli democracy. It should be condemned and wisely expunged and isolated. It is not the way of the State of Israel. There is democracy. There can be disputes but the outcome will be settled by democratic elections.

He said in his remarks, "Peace is not only in prayers * * * but it is in the desire of the Jewish people. This rally," as he addressed the group, "must broadcast to the Israeli public, to the world Jewish public and many in the Western and outside world, that the people of Israel want peace, support peace."

It is my profound hope that the people of Israel will strive to heal the wound and the national spirit that Yitzhak Rabin's assassination has caused and that they will be able to move forward as a unified nation, continuing in the quest for peace.

That would be Prime Minister Rabin's greatest legacy and most fitting tribute. It is something that the United States and all the nations of the world must strongly support.

As I said, I was there to say goodbye to this man who was an old friend, someone who commanded the respect

and affection of millions who did not know him but respected his commitment, respected the fact that he was willing to take the risks that he took, risking his own life.

The most disappointing moments of his days, he told me 2½ weeks ago in New York City, was when people from his own faith, some of them religious leaders, reportedly religious leaders, said he should be a target for assassination because he was giving away too much of his country. This man who fought to create the state, this man who gave his life unflinchingly to the well-being of his people, criticized, called traitor, depicted in Nazi uniforms, outrageously berated in his quest to secure the safety and well-being of the State of Israel and its people.

The messages that came from people who spoke at the funeral, from our President, President Clinton, who said that he was a man chosen by God. King Hussein, who I mentioned, saluted him, his memory as a pro, and compared the assassination of his grandfather to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. He was standing there, wearing traditional dress, a headdress common to the Arab world, proud of his heritage, but willing to recognize that this leader of the Jewish people was someone whom had respected and wanted to acknowledge as a friend.

President Mubarak, President of the first Arab nation to make peace with Israel, he was there in his first visit ever to the country. And other leaders who spoke—the President of the European Union, the Prime Minister of Russia, and then, finally, his family.

I think the world listened very attentively as his 17-year-old granddaughter spoke about her grandfather and declared him as a light unto nations. It is almost a Biblical intonation. She said her grandfather's life would continue to light the way for peace, but the light that he gave her was extinguished, that she would no longer see the light nor bask in his glow of love and affection. Elegant, elegant words for a 17-year-old, but expressing what so many failed to see because they did not have the personal contact. But they were reminded that included in the greatness of this individual was a very significant human side.

One of his senior, most dedicated staff members stood, a man named Eitan Haber, who wrote some of Prime Minister Rabin's speeches. I kind of joked with him at a few meetings, because I said I wished that I could find such a speech writer. And he reminded me that the speech writing was the least significant part of a great speech. It took a great speech deliverer to make a memorable talk.

Through his tears, through Mr. Haber's tears as he stood in front of the thousands gathered there and the millions watching across the world, he took out a piece of paper that the prime minister had in his pocket. As Shimon Peres, now the Acting Prime

Minister, said, it was the first time in all the years of public service that Yitzhak Rabin had ever, ever agreed to sing in public, and he joined in a chorus in this rally of more than 100,000 people, singing a song of peace that was written to be sung by those gathered there and throughout the country. And he sang the song.

This was a man who was not comfortable making speeches or in large public gatherings. Even though the greatness that he had internally shown through, you could see, when he was with the President or on public platforms, he was always ill-at-ease, always moving around, his body language indicating some insecurity.

He sang the song, the first time and last time that he ever sang a song in public. And Mr. Haber, the speech writer, read from that song at the funeral ceremony when he took out this blood-spattered song. Because the bullet hit close to where the song was stored in Prime Minister Rabin's breast pocket.

What an anomaly, this man singing for the first time in public, for peace, putting the song, the music for the song in his pocket, and then struck down by a bullet. There is something in the coincidence of those movements that perhaps none of us will ever quite understand, but it certainly is a symbol that will always be remembered.

This was quite a week in the history of Israel, the history of democracy, the history of man. Lessons were taught in a short burst of gunfire that must caution us that extremes in language, in gesture, in tone, can turn into much more menacing things. Civility has to come back to our people, to people across the world, to democratic nations.

Mr. President, we see it in the Congress of the United States, where anger and rage takes over discussion. It has an effect that pervades our society. We should not let it happen and this tragic incident should remind us all that we have to control our speech, our relationships, our view, if our mission is to make peace. One does not have to be in a formal war to want to make peace.

So, we say goodbye with heavy hearts to this great man who proved by his own existence, his own experience, that making war could not save lives, it could not have people living in peace together, but a serious effort at shaking hands across a sea of differences could make the difference.

When I saw Chairman Arafat in his traditional dress that I had come to despise over the years—he wore a gun on his hip when he went to the United Nations—I could not forgive him for their terrorist activities. But I forgave him when he came here and shook hands. That was the moment that he earned my respect.

So, from that place where it all began in the Middle East, in those holy sites, perhaps the time has come when we will be, once again, able to make peace with one another. That is the proper place. This is the proper time.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INHOFE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

DIRECT LENDING PROGRAM

Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, it so happens that today is the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Higher Education Act of 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson. Everyone knows it was a great step forward.

Today, according to press reports, the conferees on reconciliation agreed that they would cut back on assistance to higher education and direct lending, which is now used by more than 1,300 colleges and universities in this Nation, including some colleges and universities in Oklahoma, every one of whom wants to keep the system.

There is not a college or university that is using direct lending that wants to shift back into the old system. Let me just say, the new system reduces paperwork, makes it much easier for students and colleges and universities, and the new system is good for taxpayers. The old system has all kinds of paperwork. The old system says, "If you have a student loan, you have to pay back x number of dollars whether you're employed or unemployed."

The new system permits a student to have an income-contingent loan, so that if a student wants to become a teacher and not earn so much, then the student could pay back a smaller percentage or a smaller sum; while if a student became a lawyer, or a stockbroker, maybe earning quite a bit of money, that student would pay back a larger sum. If a student was unemployed, while that student was unemployed, you would not pay back anything.

What happened in conference is they have agreed to cut back from 40 percent assistance, 40 percent of the schools, which is the cap now, down to 10 percent.

Now, I do not know who is going to tell those students in Oklahoma which three out of four of them are going to be out of the direct loan program. I am glad I am not going to have to make that decision. And I am pleased that the President, I think, is going to veto this.

Who benefits by cutting it back to 10 percent, giving a 90 percent monopoly to the banks and to the guaranty agencies? The banks and the guaranty agencies do. The guaranty agencies, incidentally, were created by us. These are not free enterprise operations. The guaranty agencies have the Federal Government guarantee. The one in Indianapolis, for example, the chief executive officer of the guaranty agency in