

LEADERSHIP UNDER PRESSURE

Yitzhak Rabin: The Price of Peace.1922-1995.

Park Avenue Synagogue. Monday May 18, 2020

Yoram Peri, "The Media and Collective Memory of Yitzhak Rabin's Remembrance", Journal of Communication, 2006.

1) Rabin's assassination was a divisive event. This made it impossible to reach a consensus over the commemorative process. In the divided Israeli body politic, o2) Facing the groups that wished to commemorate the "victim of peace," stood communities acting to blur the memory.
3) The contrast between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Tel Aviv, the city on the seashore with a cosmopolitan outlook, is the center of art and entertainment, and the city that represents the secular, democratic Israel. It is the stronghold of the peace camp. ..This city commemorated Rabin by changing the name of the square from Kings of Israel Square to Rabin Square and erecting a monument on the spot where he was killed.
4) Jerusalem, on the other hand, heavy with the weight of thousands of years of Jewish history, is the sacred symbolic focus of Jewish memory. It is the stronghold of the nationalist-clerical camp and it was in Jerusalem that the violent mass demonstrations against the Rabin government and the peace accords were held- very few commemorative events took place (except for those dictated by the location of the institution involved, such as the cemetery on Mt. Herzl or the Knesset building).

Itamar Rabinovich, Yitzhak Rabin: Soldier, Leader, Statesman, 2017

1) Rabin's assassination highlighted a stark contrast between "us" and "them." Amir killed a man whose life and career represented the essence of Israel's original establishment: East European origins, the Labor movement, Palmach (the elite military unit of prestate Israel) and Israel Defense Forces (IDF), a secular northern Tel Aviv. The years preceding the assassination were defined by a kind of culture war: a clash between the settlers, the radical Right, and a large part of the Orthodox community and the secular, moderate sector of the Israeli public, not just over the peace process but also over the country's larger orientation.

2) As early as 1994 extremist rabbis in the West Bank settlements and in the United States introduced two radical terms into the right wing's radical discourse: the "Law of the Pursuer" (Din Rodef) and the "Law of

the Informer” (Din Moser).

3) The opposition to the peace process and the political challenge to Rabin’s majority increased in 1995. The agitation of the West Bank settlers and the right wing in general in anticipation of the signing of the Oslo II agreement... The incitement against Rabin’s government and Rabin personally began to reach a new and dangerous level.

4) On October 5, the day of the Knesset vote on Oslo II, the Likud organized a mass rally in Zion Square in Jerusalem; one hundred thousand people attended. The Likud’s leadership stood on the balcony of a local hotel while flags of the State of Israel, the Likud Party, and Kahane Hai were hoisted by the crowd, alongside placards of Rabin dressed in an SS uniform. The rally turned into a mob scene at this point, and the crowd began chanting “Death to Rabin!” At some point the image of Rabin in SS uniform was screened on the wall behind the people who were speaking. The speakers harangued the crowd with inflammatory speeches, warning of the dangers inherent in the Oslo Accords and blasting the government that signed it

5) After the assassination, the warmth turned into an emotional swell of love, adoration, and a profound sense of loss. Thousands of young men and women kept vigil near the assassination site and near his home, holding candles: the “candles generation,” as they came to be known. They mourned his death and sensed that the country’s progression toward a better future was halted. Rabin’s funeral was an impressive event.

Seventy-eight countries were represented, a huge number for a country used to standing alone. Two Arab heads of state attended: King Hussein of Jordan, Rabin’s good friend, and President Mubarak of Egypt. Egypt had been at peace with Israel since 1979, but an Egyptian president had not been in Israel since Sadat’s historic journey in November 1977, a symptom of the cold peace between the two countries.

6) It can be said that Amir did indeed inflict a severe blow on the peace process of the 1990s. Rabin uniquely combined a determination to proceed in the peace process with expertise in Israel’s national security agenda, the trust and support of a large part of the Israeli public, an excellent relationship with President Clinton, and Arafat’s respect. His removal from the scene—and eventual replacement by Netanyahu, who promised to respect the Oslo Accords but in fact emasculated the Oslo process—interrupted the historical process that began in 1992 and

destroyed its momentum.

7) Rabin was in many respects the quintessential sabra, the native-born Israeli: childhood and adolescence in the mainstream of the Labor movement, the Kadoorie school, the Palmach, the 1948 generation, a rough exterior concealing an inner sensitivity.

Bibliography.

*Leslie Derfler, Yitzhak Rabin: A Political Biography, 2014- *well researched and written.*

*Itamar Rabinovich, Yitzhak Rabin: Soldier, Leader, Statesman, 2017-*an outstanding biography by a leading Israeli academic and diplomat.*

*Yoram Peri, The Rabin Memoirs, 1996- *particularly useful for its "Afterword"*. *Yitzhak Rabin, Rabin Memoirs, 1979. *–useful but obviously doesn't include the most important periods of his political life.*

YouTube.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's State Funeral Service, 1 hour and 27 minutes, 1995- *a memorable occasion, including President Clinton's speech with sections in Hebrew and other languages.*