

# Rabin the loner changed history

By KARIN LAUB  
Associated Press Writer

JERUSALEM (AP) — There was little room for emotion or ideology in the world of Yitzhak Rabin, a blunt and pragmatic leader shaped by a lifetime in the military.

From his teen-age years, Rabin fought or led others against Arab nations or Palestinian militants. But in 1992 he set himself a new agenda: to make peace with the Arabs and lead Israel out of its isolation.

He was not deterred by powerful resistance to peace, from either Islamic militants who wanted Israel destroyed or right-wing Israelis who vowed the entire Biblical land of Israel would remain in Israeli hands. A right-wing Israeli is the suspect in Rabin's assassination Saturday at age 73.

Rabin, the nation's first native-born prime minister and its first to be assassinated, had told his people it was time to discard old fears rooted in the Nazi Holocaust and the 100-year conflict to secure the Jewish state.

"No longer are we necessarily a people that dwell alone, and no longer is it true that the whole world is against us," Rabin said after his 1992 election victory.

Dubbed "Mr. Security," Rabin was the one politician Israelis trusted enough to take the risks involved along the rocky path toward peace. He would get impatient with those who would not walk with him, once calling right-wing protesters "propellers" spinning in place.

But his deepest reservations centered on dealing with the Palestine Liberation Organization. He had to overcome a deep mistrust of Yasser Arafat and his cohorts, whom he had long condemned as "terrorists."

From the first reluctant handshake with Arafat on the White House lawn on Sept. 13, 1993, when the first Israel-PLO framework for autonomy was signed, Rabin was never fully at

ease at giving power to the guerrilla leader.

But his distrust of Arafat did not keep him from eagerly seeking peace with Jordan's King Hussein or with approaching Syria despite strong doubts about withdrawing from the Golan Heights.

He, Arafat and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres shared the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts toward peace. It was Peres who initiated the process, but Rabin who shouldered the responsibility.

Few knew the risks as he did. As a young officer in the 1948 Independence War, Rabin oversaw the expulsion of 50,000 Palestinian men, women and children from coastal areas.

As chief of staff in 1967, he planned the lightning war when Israel captured the lands whose return he was negotiating when he was killed.

In 1976 he authorized the raid in Entebbe, Uganda, where Israeli commandos rescued more than 100 Israeli hostages from a plane hijacked by Palestinian terrorists.

As defense minister in 1988, he ordered troops to break the bones of Palestinians rebelling against Israeli occupation, arguing it would keep down the death toll.

"He gives people the feeling that he is a harsh, solid soldier who won't betray them," Yaron London, an Israeli TV journalist, once said of Rabin. "He is exactly what you see. There is no mystery about him."

There were contradictions. Despite nearly 30 years of political experience, Rabin remained uneasy in social situations, chain-smoking and sipping whiskey at cocktail parties or blushing when stepping in front of reporters' microphones. He rarely slept more than five hours a night.

His political rivals said he had a nervous breakdown on the eve of the 1967 Middle East war, and he himself admitted in his biography to an unexplained feeling



Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, left, shakes hands with PLO leader Yasser Arafat as President Clinton looks on Sept. 13, 1993, at the historic signing of the Middle East peace accord.

of fatigue.

Rabin was born March 1, 1922, in Jerusalem into a socialist family. In high school, he joined the Palmach underground army in British-ruled Palestine. At 26, he commanded the Harel Brigades that defended Jerusalem against Arab troops in the 1948 Middle East war.

Seeing the city nearly fall, he decided to make the military his career.

"What motivated me to remain in the army was that we must never again get into a war unprepared, as we did in the War of Independence," Rabin said not long before his death.

He moved up quickly, serving as army chief of staff from 1963 to 1968, followed by a four-year stint as Israel's ambassador to Washington.

In 1974, Israel's ruling Labor Party designated Rabin, then a

political novice, to succeed Prime Minister Golda Meir, who had to step down after leading Israel to the brink of disaster in the 1973 Yom Kippur war.

Three years later, Rabin himself had to resign over his wife Leah's illegal U.S. bank account, and he also lost leadership of the party to his political arch-rival, Shimon Peres.

He was involved when then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was conducting shuttle diplomacy in 1975 to work out an interim peace agreement with Egypt — and expressed horror when right-wingers stormed through Jerusalem to protest the American's visit.

"I doubt I shall ever witness more deplorable or misguided behavior on the part of my countrymen," Rabin wrote in "The Rabin Memoirs," his 1979 autobiography. "... There can be no excuse for Jews anywhere to stoop to such obscene behavior."



A photo from Israeli television shows Israeli police surrounding a man (center without cap) identified as right-wing activist Yigal Amir, 27, after he allegedly shot Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Tel Aviv yesterday.

# Triumphant evening turns to one of grief

By PERRY and DIANNA CAHN  
Associated Press Writers

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — It began as a triumphant night for Yitzhak Rabin. Tens of thousands turned out at Kings of Israel square to hail the premier and his political allies for their moves toward peace with the Arabs.

Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and other leaders had been standing in a row on an elevated balcony of city hall, looking down at the football-field-size plaza.

Rabin gave a speech, declaring that the time for Israeli-Arab peace had come at last. The 73-year-old premier spoke with vigor, with more conviction and elegance than he has shown in many speeches before. Popular musicians led the crowd in songs in praise of peace. There were speeches by the ambassadors from Egypt and Jordan, which made peace with Israel a year ago. The it happened

Rabin walked down a stairway

from the city hall balcony, into a sheltered area where his limousine awaited him. Just as Rabin was entering the car, witnesses said, gunshots rang out and Rabin slumped forward. Security men pushed him into his car, which sped to Ichilov Hospital. Police slammed their suspect, a man in a blue shirt, against the wall of an adjacent shopping center, then took him off in a police car.

Soon, 200 people at the shooting scene had lit candles and were sitting in vigil, awaiting news of Rabin's condition. Hundreds more, many holding lit white candles and weeping, streamed to the hospital.

The assassination stunned a nation that had never known a high-level political killing.

"It's like when they shot (U.S. President John F.) Kennedy," said Oded Klein, 26, sobbing. "You say, 'In my country, it will never happen.' The man meant so much to this country."

## RABIN...

Continued from Page A-1 organization which is anti-government and against the peace process took responsibility." He said the group identified the gunman as acting for them.

Television footage from the rally showed a clean-shaven man with short, dark hair being pinned to a wall by dozens of police.

Just before his death, Rabin had spoken at a rally held in Tel Aviv's Kings Square in support of their peace policies. Some 100,000 people attended.

Noam Kedem, a 26-year-old lawyer from Tel Aviv who supports the peace process, said he heard two or three shots and "I saw Rabin holding his stomach. I don't know exactly where he was shot, but he was holding his whole body and then he fell on the ground."

He said security men hovered over him and then two more shots were fired.

Avital Shahar, an official of the right-wing Likud Party's youth wing, said the shooting was "the worst thing that has ever happened in this country."

As he spoke, onlookers shouted insults, blaming the attack on right-wing incitement. In recent weeks, the government reportedly increased security around Rabin and his Cabinet members after threats from right-wing groups.

In recent weeks, Rabin had expressed concern about growing political violence in Israel, which is deeply divided over his autonomy agreement with the Palestinians. Under the accord, Israeli troops are to pull out of most West Bank towns and villages by the end of the year.

At a recent anti-government rally in Jerusalem, protesters held up posters of Rabin in a Nazi uniform and others jumped and banged on the car of Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer.

At last Sunday's Cabinet session, Ben-Eliezer brought up the issue of growing political violence. Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein voiced concern that many of the right-wing protesters were armed. Many Israelis, especially Jewish settlers, are given guns by the government for self-protection.

Rabin was born March 1, 1922 in Jerusalem into a socialist family. In high school, he joined the Palmach underground army and as a 26-year-old commanded the Harel Brigades that defended Jerusalem against Arab troops in the 1948 Middle East war.

He served as army chief of staff from 1963 to 1968, followed by a four-year stint as Israel's ambassador to Washington.

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