

# The Labor Party and the Peace Camp

By Uzi Baram

In contemporary Israeli public discourse, the preoccupation with ideology has died down markedly, to the point that even releasing a political platform as part of elections campaigns has become superfluous. Politicians from across the political spectrum are focused on distinguishing themselves from other contenders by labeling themselves and their rivals as right, left and center, while floating around in the air are slogans such as “political left,” “social left,” “soft right,” “new right,” and “mainstream right.” Yet what do “left” and “right” mean in Israel, and to what extent do these slogans as well as the political division in today’s Israel correlate with the political traditions of the various parties? Is the Labor Party the obvious and natural heir of The Workers Party of the Land of Israel (Mapai)? Did the historical Mapai under the stewardship of Ben Gurion view itself as a left-wing party? Did Menachem Begin’s Herut Party see itself as a right-wing party?

## The Zionist Left and the Soviet Union

As far-fetched as it may seem in the eyes of today’s onlooker, during the first years after the establishment of the state, the position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union was the litmus test of the left camp, which was then called “the workers’ camp.” This camp viewed the centrist liberal “General Zionists” party, which was identified with European liberal and middle-class beliefs in private property and capitalism, as its chief ideological rival (and with which the heads of major cities such as Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan were affiliated)-. One can add to the equation the Herut Party headed by Menachem Begin, which, though hostile to the Labor government and thus continuing the path of the towering ideologue Zeev Jabotinsky, did not perceive itself as a right-wing party in the manner of its modern day successors.

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The issue of the position on the Soviet Union divided Israeli politics, but also the workers’ parties themselves, which were dominated by Mapai under the leadership of Prime Minister David Ben Gurion. In the eyes of most of the political spectrum, the Soviet Union was perceived as the archenemy of the Zionist movement, a view that took root following the anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic [show trials against Jews](#) in various Communist countries. Thus, prior to the establishment of Israel in 1948, as well as after, the main workers’ party, Mapai, under Prime Minister Ben Gurion’s leadership, maintained a critical approach towards the Soviet Union in all that pertained to its positions on Zionism and the cruel oppression of political dissidents, while Mapam, as a Zionist-Socialist party, which admired the communist model, from which it derived inspiration for the Kibbutz movement, tried to accommodate the tension between its admiration of Communism and the Soviet Union and the latter’s hostile approach to the Zionist endeavor.



A truck with the faces of Soviet Communist leaders Lenin and Stalin at the labor day parade held in Tel Aviv on May 1, 1949. Pinn Hans/Israeli Government Press Office

The importance of the Soviet Union in shaping the Israeli political map is well exemplified by the circumstances of the establishment of the United Workers' Party (Mapam), which was the outcome of the merger of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair (to which the Kibbutz Artzi movement with its dozens of kibbutzim belonged), and the Ahdut Ha-Avodah or "Labor Unity" movement (the leadership of the Kibbutz Ha-Meuhad). This union was far from predictable, due to the fact that while Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair pursued a dovish political agenda, the Kibbutz Ha-Meuhad, under the leadership of Yitzhak Tabenkin, was hawkish and ideologically close to Begin's Herut movement, a like-minded ardent supporter of the concept of "Greater Israel" under Jewish sovereignty.

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And yet, the common denominator between these two parties, which had opposite stances in all that

pertained to questions of foreign policy and security, was their admiration of the Soviet Union as a regime that did not recognize private property, and the commitment to social equality etched into its banner. Both Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair and the Kibbutz Ha-Meuhad saw in the kibbutz the realization of the Communist vision in Israel. The stance of the various parties vis-à-vis the Soviet Union thus had a decisive influence on the political spectrum, leading to the public perception of Mapam as a left-wing party due to its pro-Soviet orientation, while Mapai was perceived as centrist. The various political-security positions underlying the various factions within these parties was, therefore, not significant in determining the camp they were associated with in Israeli politics.

The positioning of Mapai as a centrist party, despite its socialist agenda, was made possible, inter alia, by distancing itself from the label “left” so that it would not be identified with the Soviet Union. Therefore, Mapai did not define itself as a left-wing party, but rather emphasized that it was a socialist party that opposed Communist rule in countries where there was a popular democracy. Mapai was a pragmatist and not a declarative party like the Herut party at one end of the spectrum, and Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair at the other. Its leadership was above all interested in the rapid establishment of the state, and in normalizing relations with the Arab countries (not necessarily with the Palestinians), though more as a distant hope than a calculated political plan.

Already in the years prior to the founding of the state, the prevalent attitude in Mapai was a pragmatism that included a willingness to concede territory with the goal of advancing the establishment of a democratic Jewish state, an approach that received a stamp of approval with the state’s establishment. Its aspirations for peace, or more accurately, for normalized relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors, did not include a view of peace as a possible goal, particularly after Israel’s victory in the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, but within the party, there was a more moderate school that viewed peace as an objective to be strived for. Among supporters for this stream were a number of leaders from left-wing Zionism such as the first Minister of the Treasury Eliezer Kaplan, first Speaker of the Knesset Yosef Sprinzak, and Defense Minister and Secretary General of the Histadrut Labor Union Pinhas Lavon. Moshe Sharet, as well, who as the first Foreign Minister was close to Prime Minister Ben Gurion, was more conciliatory than Ben Gurion and saw peace as an important goal.



May Day March in 1957, Tel Aviv | [ISRAELI GOVERNMENT](#)

And yet, building the institutions of the state alongside dealing with the waves of mass immigration, with their attendant problems of housing and employment, pushed political issues such as the advancement of peace agreements into the background. The secret to Mapai’s strength was related to social-economic issues and to the power structures it created, such as the control of the Histadrut, which extended over the majority of the working population and through which progressive wage and pensions agreements were managed. The labor camp under the leadership of Mapai also controlled central institutions such as Bank HaPoalim, the Solel Boneh construction company and the Mashbir LeTzarchan department store chain. Most of the settlement movements were controlled by Mapai, including the Moshavim Movement as well as broad

segments of the Kibbutz movement. The strong and active youth movements followed an ideological line close to Mapai. All of this was in addition to the momentum Mapai gained as the party that led to the establishment of the state and whose leadership it constituted for many years.

## **Retreat of the Social Agenda and Ascendancy of the Foreign and Security Policy Agenda**

The attenuation of the influence of the Soviet Union on Israeli politics and the outcomes of the Six-Day War in 1967 led to the gradual reshaping of the left-wing Zionist parties and the division between right and left in Israel. As the question of the relationship to the Soviet Union waned in importance as a decisive element in all that pertained to deployment on the political map, the Labor Party (the continuation of Mapai) and the United Workers' Party (Mapam) merged in 1969 to form a new political platform, "The Alliance" ("Ha-Maarakh"). In parallel, the 1967 Six-Day War led to the conquest of the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Desert. Israel was overtaken by a euphoria driven by its power, and underestimated the power of its neighbors. The outcomes of the war strengthened the Maarakh Party, which led it, under the leadership of Golda Meir to an unprecedented victory of 56 out of 120 Knesset seats. Golda Meir led the Maarakh with a high hand, alongside popular Defense Minister Moshe Dayan. The party was forced to deal with a tense period in the public following the War of Attrition with Egypt, but it continued to be securely dominant. At the same time, it appeared that this was the Maarakh's finest hour, and no one anticipated then that the Zionist left was close to losing its longstanding rule.

The Six-Day War, alongside the conquest of broad territories during the six days of fighting, had wide-ranging effects on the public and on Israeli politics. A significant portion of the Jewish-religious population saw the results of the war as a part of a redemptive-religious process, and the occupation of the territories as an act of liberation of lands that rightfully belonged to the Jewish people by divine promise. This reality gave the national-religious youth tremendous tailwind to settle the territories and to set facts on the ground that would impede any political solution that included relinquishing these territories in the future. However, the results of the war also strengthened the hawkish foundation in portions of the public affiliated with the Zionist left, and nourished their belief in the view that Israel had the strength to deal with any military threat.

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The euphoric atmosphere and brazen self-confidence among the Israeli public and its leadership shattered with the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War in 1973. With the outbreak of this war, the state found itself unprepared, since its intelligence, as well, erred by not predicting imminent war. Golda Meir's government also dismissed ongoing signals from Sadat via the Americans. The state of Israel suffered massive bloodshed during this war. For the first time in its history, it experienced a military threat not only to its sovereignty, but also to its very existence. The Israeli public, which had become accustomed to victories and military superiority, was shocked and enraged by the way in which the war was conducted. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, just yesterday the god of the Six-Day War, became the defendant in the security fiasco, together with Prime Minister Meir and senior IDF officers, including the Chief of Staff. The fact that Israel ended the war with the upper hand changed nothing in terms of the shock that spread throughout the country. From a political perspective, it seems that something deep had been broken in the fabric of the Maarakh as a ruling party. If prior to the Yom Kippur War many in the state had endured a sense of neglect in the shadow of the smug and discriminatory leadership because they thought that, from a security standpoint, the country could not be relegated to other hands, the results of the Yom Kippur War and the shattering of the hermetic security image of the Maarakh party released these feelings and created a reality in which regime change

was possible.

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At the end of the war in 1973, elections were held for the eighth Knesset. The streets in the large cities filled with protesters against Dayan, and against the security fiasco of the war. The public outrage over the Yom Kippur War did not lead to the removal of the Maarakh from power, but the electoral writing was on the wall. The results of the elections reflected the decline in the party's status and the rise of its political rivals led by the Likud headed by Menachem Begin: The Maarakh, together with the satellite Arab parties, declined from 64 to 54 mandates, the second consecutive dip. The Likud, in contrast, gained 39 mandates.



Israeli prisoners of war in Syria (Photo credit: [Wiki commons](#))

Despite this, the Maarakh remained the largest party in the Knesset, and the main party in the government, even after these elections, enabling Golda Meir to establish a government under her leadership. The power of the new composite list, the Likud, increased dramatically in comparison to the overall number of mandates that its component parties had, heralding both the regime change in the coming elections, and the creation of the two large blocs, left and right, which characterized Israeli politics in the 1980s.

Golda Meir's new government featured for the first time Yitzhak Rabin, the decorated Chief of Staff who had led the IDF in the Six-Day War and had returned to Israel after having served as Israel's ambassador to the United States. And yet, the fury at Gold Meir and Moshe Dayan did not abate, and the government was short-lived (less than three months). After publishing the conclusions of the investigative committee (The Agranat Commission) regarding the Yom Kippur War, public protest peaked and the entire government resigned. In its stead, a government was established headed by Yitzhak Rabin. The position of Defense Minister, was presented on June 3, 1974 to Shimon Peres.

The new government instilled great hope. Rabin and Peres were perceived as two young and promising leaders with strong credentials, and the protest movements indeed disappeared from the streets and the media. The government functioned in the shadow of the painful war, but it bore no tidings of anything resembling the advancement of peace. During this time, an axis of confrontation began between the government and members of the national-religious camp around the issue of establishing new settlements in the territories occupied during the Six-Day War. Rabin supported the establishment of settlements in the

Golan Heights and the Jordan Valley, but opposed their establishment near large Arab localities such as Ramallah or Nablus. The concept underlying Rabin's opposition to settlements in the West Bank was that the territories of the West Bank were to become part of a future political arrangement. It should be noted that the political arrangement imagined by Peres and Rabin was with Jordan, in which the Kingdom of Jordan, and not the Palestinians, would be the partner in a peace agreement with Israel. Yitzhak Rabin went on record opposing any dialogue with the PLO headed by Yasser Arafat, arguing that it was a murderous terror organization that should not be granted legitimacy through dialogue. There were a few trend-setters in the Rabin government who objected to removal of the Palestinian issue from any serious and important discussion. Two ministers from the Maarakh formulated a document entitled the Yariv-Shem-Tov Formula, which called for mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO as a possibility for advancing negotiations, but the government rejected their initiative since Rabin and Peres shared the approach that if there were a solution, it would have to be advanced vis-à-vis Jordan only.



The Agranat Commission. From left to right: Yigael Yadin, Moshe Landau, Shimon Agranat, Yitzhak Nebenzahl and Haim Laskow. Photograph: Ya'akov Sa'ar, [GPO](#)

One of the fundamental chapters in the history of the settler right took place during the reign of the left-wing Rabin-Peres government, namely, the capitulation to the settlers of Elon Moreh who constituted the hard core of the West Bank settlers. The settlers tried to establish a settlement near Nablus, which the Rabin government dismantled repeatedly. And yet, after numerous attempts to occupy the land, the government relented, after the issue has become an open conflict between Rabin and Peres. The victory of the settlers, who established a movement known as Gush Emunim, constituted a key breakthrough in their messianic aspirations, and significantly, they were granted legitimacy by the Rabin government. Years later, Menahem Begin said that under his government, "many Alon Morehs" would be established.

One of the fundamental chapters in the history of the settler right took place during the reign of the left-wing Rabin-Peres government, namely, the capitulation to the settlers of Elon Moreh

Despite the hopes planted in the leaders of the new party, changes in the upper echelons of the Maarakh party following the Yom Kippur War crisis did not lead to the longed-for changes. The Maarakh straggled to the 1977 elections in a terrible state. The signs of the Yom Kippur War remained visible. The crisis had been great and had not healed even three years later. Cases of corruption in the government clouded its accomplishments, and to top it off, Yitzhak Rabin was forced to resign from his post as prime minister due to a dollar-account held by his wife in New York. Alongside the Likud party led by Begin arose another centrist party, the Democratic Movement for Change (Dash), which chipped away at the power of the Maarakh. Therefore, in 1977, the historical change of government occurred, such that for the first time since the establishment of the state, it was not a party from the Zionist left that led a government coalition, but the Likud party led by Menachem Begin, while the Maarakh, Mapai's successor, shifted to the opposition.

With the rise of the right to power for the first time came also the advancement of a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt. Just a few months after the establishment of the government, Egyptian Prime Minister Anwar Sadat traveled to Israel to address the Knesset. A vociferous opposition to the prospect of peace with Egypt coalesced on the right, which would involve return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, and the evacuation of settlements and infrastructure that had been established there, such as military airports. The Maarakh party, led by Peres, supported the process, but Begin seemed hesitant and unsure, mainly since Sadat wanted the agreement to also include advancing the Palestinian question.

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In March 1978, more than 300 military reserve officers wrote a letter to Menachem Begin in support of peace with Egypt and the evacuation of settlements that had been established in the Sinai Peninsula, which they defined as obstacles to the process. The "Officers' Letter" aroused a widespread public storm, and in its wake, a group of young men and women were stirred to establish the Peace Now organization. The founders were members of the Zionist left who defined themselves as a movement, but they never established a party. Peace Now supported dialogue with the PLO if it would disavow itself from terror. The movement's status continued to grow among the Israeli public through the struggle it waged against the First Lebanon War that broke out in 1982. It held a number of demonstrations that reached their peak following the massacre carried out by Christian phalangists against Moslems in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

The largest demonstration, which took place in September 1982, has since been referred to as the "demonstration of the 400,000" and constituted, in retrospect, the foundation of the social phenomenon known as the Israeli "Peace Camp". Peace Now was not the only or main organization in the Israeli "peace camp", but the message of peace which it proudly proclaimed functioned as the glue that bound together a variety of civil society organizations and tied them to the Zionist left-wing parties, leading to the re-labeling of the entire Israeli left as "the peace camp." The murder of peace activist Emil Grunzweig during a Peace Now demonstration in Jerusalem near the Prime Minister's Office in 1983 was a dark omen of things to come, and after the murderer was apprehended and tried, it was clear that his motives were nationalistic and influenced by the extensive incitement by the Israeli right and Ariel Sharon's supporters.

The advancement of peace with Israel's Arab neighbors and with the Palestinians as a political agenda and a topic that divided the Israeli political map into left and right, did not occur overnight. Even between 1977-1984, when it was in the opposition vis-à-vis the Likud, the Labor Party as a movement did not belong to the Peace Camp. It did not even adopt the Yariv-Shem Tov Formula which maintained that dialogue with the PLO was imperative. However, during these years, voices of protest gradually began to emerge, particularly during the Lebanon War. Already then, there were key members of the Labor Party who participated in Peace Now meetings and attended demonstrations, even appearing on their stages. Among them were Amir Peretz, Avraham Burg, Yossi Beilin, and the author of this article.

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In 1984, a national unity government was forged between Likud and the Labor Party. Shimon Peres, who in accordance with the rotation agreement with the Likud presided as Prime Minister from 1984-1986, increased his references to the possibility of a diplomatic agreement with Jordan, but it never was realized. Two years later, Yitzhak Shamir, leader of the Likud, assumed office as Prime Minister, and did everything in his power to torpedo any possibility of advancing diplomatic processes. In the two years between 1986 and 1988, Shimon Peres served as Foreign Minister under Prime Minister Shamir, laboring tirelessly to advance a peace agreement with Jordan, known as the "London Agreement." However, Shamir was staunchly opposed, and the Americans did not offer Peres the support for which he had hoped.

The Peace Camp supported Peres' efforts to advance an agreement with Jordan, but the gaps between him and the Labor Party grew only wider. The First Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, beginning in December 1987, found former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the role of Defense Minister. The ongoing murderous terror attacks, and the responses they drew, led the entire government, and Rabin especially, into a conflict with the Israeli peace camp. Yitzhak Rabin exhibited a strong desire to suppress the Intifada absolutely with a strong arm, while the Peace Camp called for dialogue with the Palestinians. Within the Labor party a debate raged regarding the preferred strategy, but ultimately, the party took up position behind Rabin's approach, which promoted suppression of the popular protest with an iron fist. The First Intifada continued for approximately five years, undermining personal safety in Israel and taking a toll in civilian lives even in Israel's largest cities, leading to a change in the line of thinking in the Labor Party about all that pertained to the utility of suppressing a national rebellion using military might. The Labor Party sensed Israeli society's growing frustration with the violence and decided to leave the hawkish Shamir government in 1990. Following a failed attempt to establish an alternative coalition led by Shimon Peres, the Labor Party turned to the opposition and began forging deeper connections with the Meretz Party, the left-wing Zionist party with a clear intent to advance the peace process.

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At the same time, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the outbreak of the First Gulf War, US President George Bush began pressuring Israel to advance dialogue with the Palestinians, while the American Secretary of State mentioned the possibility of sanctions against Israel if it did not agree to holding a peace conference in Madrid. In the summer of 1991, it seemed to the American president that the hour was ripe. The United States was waging the First Gulf War in Iraq in a coalition with a number of Arab countries, and while Iraq had fired missiles at Israel, Yitzhak Shamir chose not to retaliate. Bush saw this situation as a window of opportunity that would also perhaps leave the coalition he had made with the Arab countries intact.

The Madrid Conference was set into motion, but nothing about it led to a significant breakthrough. It did not include direct dialogue with the PLO, some of whose people, for example, Saeb Erekat, participated in the conference as part of the Jordanian delegation. The conference enjoyed broad international attendance, and its achievement was a vague agreement on the terms of reference that served as a preliminary stamp of approval for continuing negotiations in the future. The Israeli peace camp viewed the Madrid Conference as an important opportunity, and held gatherings and demonstrations supporting dialogue in the framework of the conference. At the same time, it was clear that the intention of the Israeli Shamir government was to prevent a significant breakthrough with the Palestinians. The entire convening of the conference seemed like Israeli lip service to the superpowers.



Opening of the Madrid Conference with speech of US President George Bush, October 30, 1991  
Knesset- Source: [Knesset](#)

During the Knesset elections campaign during the year following the Madrid conference in 1992, the Labor Party advanced Yitzhak Rabin as its candidate for the position of prime minister, following a struggle with Shimon Peres. Rabin, the Chief of Staff from the Six-Day War, and Defense Minister during the First Intifada, not the candidate that the peace camp had hoped for, decided to focus the election campaign on strengthening security and aspiring to advance a peace agreement. Clearly owing to his security background, Rabin even succeeded in wooing members of the right-wing. He was elected prime minister after his party won 44 seats, while Meretz, which was strongly identified with the peace camp, also achieved great success with 12 mandates, enabling Yitzhak Rabin to establish a government by a narrow margin.

In its first steps, the Rabin government hobbled along in the diplomatic realm, but as the Oslo discussions began to gain hold, the government supported the agreement, and under Rabin's leadership, it took a historic step that led to the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. The peace camp for the first time was catapulted from the regions of civil society to circles of decision making at the government's table, and the parties of the Zionist left – Labor and Meretz, on one hand, and the peace camp represented by civil society organizations such as Peace Now and B'Tselem on the other, became the face of the new Israeli left. At the same time, the Israeli right, mainly the national-religious right, began defining itself as positioned on the other side of the fence, opposing recognition of the PLO and the advancement of a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

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The fact that the Israeli government had initiated a process with the Palestinians drew both public support and vehement opposition. The peace camp had to make a strong showing against the insistent right. This was an unfamiliar situation for the camp, which had always struggled against government parties that supported the settlements, whether by deed or passive silence. And so, for the first time, the peace camp struggled to strengthen the government, and not the opposition.

Yitzhak Rabin sought to garner increased support for the process even after the signing of the agreement in Washington. He aspired to maintain a position that was more centrist and security-based than ideological, although in practice, he reinforced ideas that formed the very foundation of the peace camp. Although Rabin is viewed today in the left-wing camp as leader of the peace camp, I have my doubts as to whether, at the time, Rabin saw himself as such. And yet, in the public eye, his actions and bravery turned him into the most important leader of the Israeli peace camp.

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The extreme settler right-wing viewed the aspiration to an arrangement with the Palestinians as a national and religious threat that flew in the face of the "process of redemption" in which it believed. The massacre committed by Baruch Goldstein, a settler from Hebron in the Patriarchs Cave in 1994, served to stir outrage among the Palestinians and impede the peace process so that it could not be furthered. The mass murder perpetrated by Goldstein was unilaterally condemned in Israeli society, with the exception of fringe groups. The peace camp demonstrated against the disgraceful murder and its assault on the peace process. Likewise, Palestinian opponents to the advancement of an agreement with Israel perpetrated a series of horrific terror attacks in various Israeli cities. The Palestinians were dissatisfied with the lack of measures to ease the strictures on their lives and opponents of the agreement launched terror attacks that mandated response and strengthened sectors of public opinion in their opposition to the Oslo Accords.

Still, despite the strong protest against the government, Rabin and Arafat, in late September 1995 in Washington, signed the Oslo II Accords. Already prior to the signing, the national-religious right had taken up camp across from the Knesset in an unequivocal and incitement-filled struggle against Yitzhak Rabin. Rabin, the extolled general and admired leader, was denounced as a traitor, and the right's struggle against the "abandoning neglect of birthright territory" went on in full swing. On October 5, 1995, a large right-wing demonstration was held against the accords, featuring blatant incitement against Yitzhak Rabin. This and other demonstrations did not prevent the Knesset from approving the Oslo II Accords. The protests migrated to the streets, with the peace camp now defined as supporting the process and losing some of its power and uniqueness as a leading opposition movement. The right fought in every means possible, and the demonstrations in front of Yitzhak Rabin's residence as well as that of the ministers, continued in full force. I remember the daily demonstrations in front of my own house. One morning, I decided to take up an argument with some protesters regarding the importance of the agreement to Israel. It was difficult to hold a genuine dialogue, because the language they used made it impossible since "making an agreement requires a Jewish majority, and not a majority that relies on Arab voters." I felt as if the polarization between the two camps was growing by the day.



Yitzhak Rabin with President Clinton and Yasser Arafat during the signing of the Oslo I Accord in 1993. Source: [Flickr](#)

For a moment, it appeared that the peace camp was abandoning the street to the right-wing incitement, which was consistent in its ideological messages and ad hominem attacks, in an attempt to disprove Yitzhak Rabin's loyalty to the State of Israel. Towards the end of October 1995, a decision was made to plan a rally in support of the peace process. There were debates as to how likely it was to succeed, since of course it is easier to organize an "anti" rally than one that is "pro." It was therefore decided that the topics of preserving democracy and condemning incitement would also be part of the demonstration's scenery. The demonstration was held at the Kings of Israel Square in Tel Aviv on a Saturday night, November 4, 1995. All members of the peace camp in Israeli society took part in it. Yitzhak Rabin himself was surprised by the size of the rally and the warm welcome he and Shimon Peres received. Despite the tense atmosphere all across Israel, none of the attendees at the rally predicted that after singing the "Song of Peace" with Yitzhak Rabin with singer Miri Aloni, that the Prime Minister would be struck down with the bullets of a lowly murderer who had meticulously planned his crime.

The mourning was too heavy to bear. Many cried the passing of the architect of the peace that gave hope to so many. Young people lit memorial candles in his memory and among the public, harsh critique emerged, including criticism directed at security officials who failed to prevent the murder.

Yigal Amir, the prime minister's assassin, sought to extinguish the peace process. In the initial assessment, it appeared that he failed in his plot, but from today's vantage, it seems that his plot was successful. The collapse of the process was not caused by the three bullets that murdered the prime minister -- many processes ensued that contributed. Yet there is no doubt that Rabin's absence from the arena dealt a fatal blow not only to the Israeli peace camp but to the state and to Israeli society as a whole.