

## REVIEWS



### Israel's Fateful Hour

Yehoshafat Harkabi

New York: Harper and Row, 1988,  
236 pgs., US \$22.50 cloth

Yehoshafat Harkabi is a former chief of military intelligence in the Israeli Defence Forces. For many years Harkabi was widely acknowledged to be the most authoritative proponent of the view that Arab and Palestinian hostility to Israel's existence was so intransigent as to preclude any resolution of the conflict.

Today Harkabi presents a very different outlook – not so much because his own orientation has changed but because he has noticed a significant change in the politics throughout much of the Arab world. It is this change – what he refers to as an increasing separation of grand design and policy – that Harkabi maintains Israel “must exploit for the sake of its security and the peace of future generations, especially today, when moderates still occupy important positions among the Arab states and the Palestinians.”

This book, first published in Hebrew almost three years ago and now in its fourth printing in Israel, presents a challenge to Israelis and friends of Israel throughout the world. Harkabi – currently professor of International Relations and Middle East Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem – is a tough-minded realist who discerns that the Arab-Palestinian position has grudgingly and equivocally been evolving in a more moderate direction and that Israel must take advantage of this shift now or else the opportunity will probably be lost as Arab-Palestinian attitudes harden in the face of Israeli intransigence.

Harkabi believes that Israel stands at a crossroads and the course chosen will determine “whether it can continue to exist.” His fundamental argument is that Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is untenable, and that unless Israel negotiates with the Palestinians and their leaders, the PLO, the region will move down the road to war: a dangerous dynamic that could, in an era of ever more destructive weapons, end in Israel's “national suicide.” He convincingly argues that the alternatives facing Israel are either a Palestinian state alongside Israel or continuing violence in response to the occupation.

No naive visionary, Harkabi presents himself as a “Machiavelian” dove. His positions are based on the view that Israel's security is best protected by a peace settlement with its neighbours which guarantees Israel's security needs through early warning installations and partial demilitarization of the new Palestinian state.

When Harkabi says “today, any demand for a settlement without the PLO is equivalent to demanding no settlement,” he is not alone. A large number of Israeli officers recently formed the Military Council on Peace and Security in support of the policy of trading territory for peace. Harkabi's successors as chiefs of military intelligence have also been critical of their government for not actively pursuing a peace settlement. A secret Israeli military intelligence report prepared last December noted that the PLO is truly ready to accept a two-state solution and that it is an illusion for the Israeli government to believe it can avoid negotiating with the PLO. A similar report written by the current head of military intelligence was leaked to the press in March. Not surprisingly, the government led by Prime Minister Shamir quickly rejected the document.

It is not only the ruling Likud party that comes in for Harkabi's harsh criticism. He is strongly opposed to the Labour party joining national unity governments and declares: “What we need in Israel is not a united front behind a wrong policy but searching self-criticism and a careful examination of our goals and means, so that we can differentiate between realistic vision and adventurist fantasy.” Similarly, he has no patience for the view that non-Israelis should refrain from criticizing Israel and argues that “allowing Israel to maintain its wrong policy is incomparably worse.”

Machiavellian or not, Yehoshafat Harkabi has written – and well before the Palestinian intifada – the most persuasive work on why Israel, and indeed all parties to the dispute, desperately need a peace based upon the principle of mutual recognition and self-determination. Turning the conflict into a zero-sum game, he continually reminds us, is fraught with danger: “There must be a realistic and humane understanding that the conflict is a tragedy for both sides, and while Israel's adversaries are indeed enemies, they are also allies in the struggle to end the conflict.” What Harkabi calls self-interest, others understand to be Common Security.

– Simon Rosenblum

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### Our Man in Moscow: A Diplomat's Reflections on the Soviet Union

R.A.D. Ford

Toronto: University of Toronto Press,  
1989, 356 pgs., \$29.95 cloth

Robert Ford is a scholar of Russian history and Soviet government and a connoisseur of Russian literature, poetry and fine arts. In his twenty-one years of diplomatic service for Canada in the Soviet Union his sympathy for the country and its intellectual life never interfered with his profes-

sionalism as a diplomat. Nor did his understanding of the Soviet system soften his resolve in dealing with it.

In 1979 Ford foresaw Gorbachev's rise to leadership. He also predicted the systemic contradictions of implementing *glasnost* and *perestroika* within the Soviet system. According to the author, fundamental economic reform is not compatible with Soviet ideology. He argues that the Soviets would moderate their ideological objectives only in times of desperation or crisis. A declining Russian population, the emergence of an explosive nationalism among the Soviet Union's many minorities, Islamic irredentism and a growing restlessness within the Warsaw Pact, may signal the beginnings of such a crisis.

The author provides interesting glimpses of differing Soviet policies towards each Warsaw Pact state. He is also informative and accurate about how and why the Soviets became entangled in Afghanistan. The key objective in Soviet foreign policy, according to Ford, is international recognition of Soviet parity with the United States. The vagaries of Soviet-American relations over the years are briefly but brilliantly analyzed, focussing on human rights, strategic arms talks, and trade issues.

Ironically, the achievement of “peaceful coexistence” led to profound misunderstandings between the superpowers. Neither the Soviets or the Americans could agree on a mutually acceptable definition of the policy which in theory defined what was acceptable and prohibited international behaviour. For example, the Soviets believed their military involvement in Afghanistan was acceptable under the terms of the agreement. This was not the opinion of the Americans. Canada was wary of the ambiguities of “peaceful coexistence” and, on Ford's