

## THE PRIME MINISTERS: SOLDIERS AND PEACEMAKERS

(a film review by Mark R. Leeper)

**CAPSULE:** This is a film adaptation of the memoirs of Yahuda Avner, Israeli ambassador to Britain who was an advisor, speechwriter, and aide to five prime ministers of Israel. This film is a continuation of *THE PRIME MINISTERS: THE PIONEERS* and tells more personal remembrances of his years in service to the highest levels of Israeli government. Some of his stories are humorous, all are insightful, and this film makes for a compact history of Israel during his years in service. Rating: low +2 (-4 to +4) or 7/10

At age 84 Yahuda Avner gives us a short history of his years as an advisor to two Israeli Prime Ministers. Himself, he had little power of his own in the Israeli government, but he was a highly placed advisor and aide to an impressive set of the Prime Ministers of that country. He had close relationships with Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, Menachem Begin, and Shimon Peres. Highly trusted, he shared his insights into the politics of the Middle East with people in power in Israel. What power he had was as an experienced opinion. Here he tells us what the situations were and what advice he gave the Prime Ministers. In return he got to be an eyewitness to the attitudes of the people of power. He witnessed details surrounding events that give a texture to great, if often frustrating, historical events. His observations and insights are told in his memoir, *THE PRIME MINISTERS*. It has been adapted into two documentary films.

In 2013 Richard Trank directed *THE PRIME MINISTERS: THE PIONEERS* based on Avner's years serving Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir. *THE PRIME MINISTERS: SOLDIERS AND PEACEMAKERS* is done in a uniform style and picks up his story in 1974, shortly after the Yom Kippur war, which was an extremely costly victory for Israel. The newer film takes us through his years serving Yitzhak Rabin and Menachem Begin.

Trank and Avner also take us through the earlier conflicts of the country's military. Among them is a description of the Irgun and the Israel Defense Force coming to violence in vying for. That conflict would have effects in later political differences. Avner gives us his take on acts of sky terrorism, including the mass kidnapping that led to the raid on Entebbe. We are given accounts of Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the Camp David negotiations, and the later assassination of Anwar Sadat. There is the friction between Begin and President Carter, the strained relationship with President Reagan, and the war in Lebanon.

The film covers the history of Israel during the terms of Rabin and Begin. Avner covers the substance of the political decisions made, but he also conveys the texture of being there in the conference room, in the airplane, or at the demonstration. He assesses the people's values. He tells us that Golda Meir was the first Prime Minister who had a genuine understanding and empathy for Diaspora Jews. Yitzhak Rabin he assesses as a man of utter logic. By being present at defining moments for five different prime ministers he may well have had a better understanding of Middle East politics than even the prime ministers themselves had.

The extended interview with Avner is illustrated with news and documentary footage, photographs, and news reports. Voicing the words of historical figures are Sandra Bullock, Michael Douglas, Leonard Nimoy, and Christoph Waltz. This is a respectable adaptation of Avner's book, with a straightforward account of events. I rate it a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale or 7/10. Note: Ambassador Avner died March 24, 2015, in Jerusalem at age 86.

Film Credits: <http://theprimeministers.org/filmmakers/>

What others are saying: <http://tinyurl.com/void-pm-soldiers-peacemakers>

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