

# Double reflection of Israel

**OPEN SECRETS: Israeli Nuclear Foreign Policies by Israel Shahak, Pluto Press, London-Chicago 1997**

**JEWISH HISTORY, JEWISH RELIGION: The Weight of Three Thousand Years by Israel Shahak, Pluto Press, London-Chicago 1996**

**Reviewed by  
Ludwig Watzal**

**T**HE future of the Palestinian people would have looked much brighter if there would have been more Israelis like Israel Shahak. Not that Shahak is a friend of Arafat, by any means. In his writings, the Palestinians play only a very marginal role. His books are very important for the non-Jewish world because they reveal a reality of Judaism and Israeli politics which hardly anybody knows outside Israel. Therefore, he corrects the false image which prevails about Israel in the West, especially in the US and Germany.

Israel Shahak is an outstanding personality. He was born in Poland in 1933. The Nazis put him as a

child in the concentration camp at Bergen Belsen. He arrived in Palestine in 1945. At the moment he lives in Jerusalem as Professor Emeritus of Organic Chemistry. All his life he has been fighting against Zionism because he thinks it is discriminatory and racist. In an interview with the author, Shahak stated, "Zionism must be criticized, even if a Jewish state had been established on a desert island without harming anybody." Shahak is Chairman of the Israeli branch of the League of Human Rights. Since 1968 he has been fighting against discrimination, racism and all kinds of oppression in Israel. He is a humanist and an anti-Zionist. He did not become a Marxist when it was fashionable. He detests imperialism whether in the name of God, Abraham or Bill Clinton.

In *Open Secrets* Shahak analyzes the Hebrew press and shows that what Israeli Jews are told by the establishment about their country's foreign policy and intentions through the national media is totally inconsistent with what the Israeli government is telling the rest of the world. Shahak shows

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that, with the support of the Jewish lobby in the US, Israel is conducting a covert policy of expansionism and aims to gain political control, not just in Palestine, but of the entire Middle East from Morocco to Pakistan. "Israel's 'wish for peace' is in my view not a principle of Israeli policy, while the wish to extend Israeli domination and influence is."

Israeli policies, especially towards the Palestinians have an "ideological aspect:" "Briefly, discrimination amounting to a form of apartheid, but one based on religion not on race, is inherent in the character of Israel as a 'Jewish state'... Israel discriminates not only against Arab, or only against Palestinians, as is correctly supposed (especially amongst the Arabs) outside Israel, but against all non-Jews, including its best non-Jewish friends."

In Israel, says Shahak, power is firmly in the hands of the security system and of the Zionist parties whose deep commitment to Zionist ideology has not been challenged. An eye-opener for Arafat

and the Palestinian people is the last chapter in *Open Secrets*. Shahak's book is outstanding and a must not only for the Palestinians, but for anybody interested in Israeli politics.

Of even greater importance is *Jewish History, Jewish Religion*. Here, Shahak reveals the roots of Jewish chauvinism, racism and religious fundamentalism. Baruch Goldstein's massacre at the Ibrahimi Mosque and the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin can only be understood when one comprehends what Judaism is all about. "I have personally witnessed an ultra-religious Jew refuse to allow his phone to be used on the Sabbath in order to call an ambulance for a non-Jew who happened to have collapsed in his Jerusalem neighborhood."

Shahak thinks "Israel as a Jewish state constitutes a danger not only to itself and its inhabitants, but to all Jews and all other people and states in the Middle East and beyond." The more Israel turns to Judaism, the more ideological its policies become. The policy is based on religious beliefs or pro-

fanely speaking on the historical right of the Jews. "The influence of 'Jewish ideology' on many Jews will be stronger the more it is hidden from public discussion."

Shahak asked the Jews to be critical of their past and of themselves. He concludes this penetrating analysis with a call for a struggle against anti-Semitism and all forms of racism but "the struggle against Jewish chauvinism and exclusivism, which must include a critique of classical Judaism, is now of equal or greater importance." *Jewish History, Jewish Religion* is a remarkable book which gives all non-Jews a deep understanding of Judaism's real meaning. Without this knowledge Israel's politics and political goals cannot be understood adequately. He holds a mirror up to Israeli society and hopes that it will change. Shahak belongs to the few people who stick to their beliefs at whatever cost.

A pirated Arabic version of *Jewish History, Jewish Religion* appeared on the market mid-October, with introductions by Gore Vidal and Edward Said price approx \$3