

Israel Shahak, *Open Secrets. Israeli Nuclear and Foreign Policies*, Pluto Press, London-Chicago 1997, 193 p., \$ 38.



The neocons and the Fawning Corporate Media (FCM) in the United States of America are on a war spree again; this time against Iran. This Muslim country and its leadership are demonised by neocons and some public interest groups as the embodiment of the ultimate evil. Like in the case of Iraq, the Americans have a distorted picture of reality due to a selective information policy by the FCM. According to opinion pool made by CNN 71 percent believe that Iran possesses nuclear weapons. One would have expected that after the Iraq fiasco, Americans would become a little smarter.

The anti-Iranian bias of the U. S. political elite rests at least on three pillars: firstly, the hostage crisis between November 4, 1979 and January 20, 1981, secondly, the permanent pressure by Israeli governments and their U. S. supporters over the last 20 years. But, thirdly, the most important one are geopolitical considerations. Here, the book by Israel Shahak comes into play, in which he exposes Israel's strategic policy as it really is. Drawing exclusively on the Hebrew press, Shahak reveals that the Israeli ideology is widely misunderstood outside, since, as in the case of foreign policy, "no attention is paid to what the Israeli establishment says to Israeli Jews about its intentions and policies" (p. 7). They cannot be understood according to what they say to the outside world, writes the author.

Apart from providing an analysis on Israel's foreign and nuclear policy, the book is in many ways a discription of Israeli Hebrew media. Prof. Shahak's radical thesis is supported from Israeli politicians and military people. In the preface, Shahak has interesting things to say about this relationship. „Israeli long-range plans are decided upon by army generals, intelligence seniors and high officials. The government and the Prime Minister only rarely initiate policy. In all wars stated by Israel, ist government has been informed of decisions to attack when troops were already in position.“ As a result, the author quotes mainly souces from the security establishment that take up much space in the media. Another aspect, underestimated by Western pundits, is the significance of Zionist ideology "In Israel, power is firmly in the hand of the Securits System and of the Zionist parties whose deep commitment to Zionist ideology has not been challenged." (p. 176)

Prof. Israel Shahak was an extraordinary person. Untill his retirement, he was tenured as a professor of Organic Chemistry at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A survivor of the Warsaw ghetto and Bergen-

Belsen concentration camp, he emigrated in 1945 to Palestine (now Israel). He was a humanist, a long human rights activist. For many years he was chairman of the Israeli Human Rights League and consistently criticized Zionism, Israel's policy towards the Palestinians, the reactionary elements in Jewish religion, and Jewish fundamentalism. He passed away on July 2, 2001 at the age of 68. Along Yeseyahu Leibowitz, he could be regarded as one of Israel's last prophets.

The author calls a spade a spade. His opinion differs markedly from those of Western pundits who solely relay on official communiqués because they can't read the Hebrew press. That is why Shahak comes to totally different conclusions about Israeli policy aims. These "aims of the State of Israel (and its predecessor the Zionist Movement) at any given period of time have to be understood according to what the Israeli leaders say to their followers, and now especially by what they say to the Israeli Jewish elite. They cannot be understood according to what they say to the outside world". (p. 1) For Shahak „the `wish for peace`, so often assumed as the Israeli aim, is not in my view a principle of Israeli policy, while the wish to extend Israeli domination and influence is." (p. 2)

Shahak describes the principals on which Israeli policies are based on: „In the first place they are regional in their extent; their subject is the entire Middle East from Morocco to Pakistan, and in addition they have an important global aspect, especially prominent in the 1990s." (p. 3) However, the global aspects have taken a back seat to Israel's regional aims. The latter have two intertwined goals: „hegemony-seeking and the support of the `stability` of most of the now-existing regimes in the Middle East, with the notable exception of Iran, and (only for a relatively short period, now ended) of Iraq." (p. 3) Israel's enmity toward Iran and its arguments then and now are strikingly similar.

After the ousting of the Shah, the main Israeli policy aim was the overthrow of the Islamic Iranian regime. The argument used was the removal of „Islamic fundamentalism" for the supposed benefit of the West. According to Shahak, this argument was a fallacy, although, „tamely accepted by many U. S. `experts`": Firstly, he argues, Israel has for years tacitly supported Hamas and other Islamic fundamentalist organizations against the PLO. Secondly, the most fundamentalist Islamic state in the Middle East is Saudi Arabia, which Israel is not opposing. Today, the Israeli politicians, their supporters in the U. S., the FCMs, and almost the whole U. S. Congress support the „argument" that the non-existent Iranian nuclear weapons would pose an imminent danger not only for Israel but to world peace. Looking at the facts, this claim could not be further more from reality than the forecast of the coming of the Messiah tomorrow. The U. S. and its allies have to come to grips with the political demonisation of Iran by the neconservative warmongers and dread brokers in order to stay politically sane. What

happens to a society where „fear agents“ have a say, is described by Gideon Levy in his article „What would happen if Israel stopped fighting the world?“, published in „Haaretz“ of April 8, 2010. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/1161614.html>

Shahak writes that Israel can't accept another power in the region, that could challenge its hegemony. Consequently, it pursues a policy of „coalition building“ against Iran, which „may led to war“, writes Shahak. Israel's efforts to establish an anti-Iranian front are detailed in chapter two. According to Shahak, Israeli strategists are not bothered by the oppression of the Palestinians. What they are concerned with „establishing a hegemony over the entire Middle East, conceived of as extending from India to Mauretania. Of course, the first victim of Israeli expansionism in search of such a hegemony is the Palestinian nation.“ (p. 32) Shahak quotes a 1981 speech by then Defense Minister Ariel Sharon in which „he defined the extension of Israel's influence `from Mauretania to Aghanistan` as an Israeli aim“. (p. 32) While Israeli politicians depict the Iranian regime in the darkest colors, Shahak holds up a mirror to Israel's political elite. He warns: „The prospect of Gush Emunim (The Block of the Faithful), or some secular right-wing Israeli fanatics, or some of the delirious Israeli Army generals, seizing control of Israeli nuclear weapons and using them in accordance with their `knowledge` of politics or by the authority of `divine command` cannot be precluded either. In my view the likelihood of the occurrence of some such calamity is growing. We should not forget that while Israeli Jewish society undergoes a steady political polarization, the Israeli Security System increasingly relies on the recruitment of cohorts from the ranks of the extreme right.“ (p. 37-38)

In an interview with the Egyptian newspaper Al Ahram, the then Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said: „Israel is ready to make peace with any Middle Eastern state with the exception of Iran.“ (p, 67) At that time, Saddam Hussein was still alive and kicking before he was turned into a monster by the Israeli leadership, the neocons and „the boy-emporar from Crawford, Texas“ at the helm. Shahak writes that once the Israeli generals decided that Iran is the most dangerous enemy for Israel and the whole Middle East, they did everything to promote this conviction abroad. He continues that „it is perfectly credible that stirring up any conceivable country against Iran remains the guiding principle of the new and independent Israeli policies“. Quoting Aluf Benn, who wrote in Haaretz from September 28, 1995 that Yitzhak Rabin's strategy was „to push the U. S. and other western powers into a confrontation with Iran. If Israel confronts Iran on its own, it may get involved in a religious war against the entire Muslim world.“ (p. 91) The Israeli propaganda (Hasbara) depicted the rulers of Iran as „a danger to peace in the entire world and a threat to equilibrium between Western civilization and Islam“. (p. 91) Recently, this arguments were revived by Minister President Binyamin Netanyahu.

Israel Shahak belonged to the very few Israeli who entertained no illusions about the so-called peace process and about the role of Yassir Arafat in this drama for the Palestinian people. Anybody who has read Hebrew newspapers carefully, like Shahak did, could have known since September 7, 1993 that the Palestinians in Oslo were pulled over the barrel by Israeli diplomacy. Shahak quotes Yitzhak Rabin from the Israeli daily Yediot Ahronot where he boasted about his victory: "The entire united Jerusalem will be outside the autonomy (...) Jewish settlements will be placed under an exclusive Israeli jurisdiction; the Autonomy Council will have no authority over them. The forces of the Israeli Army will be redeployed on locations determined only by us." (p. 162) The term withdrawal was only used for the Gaza Strip, not for the West Bank. Rabin did not bother to specify the exact borders of the land in question. Already in September 1994 the plan for the "bypassing roads" (roads to be only used by Jewish settlers and the military) was discussed and revealed in the Hebrew press in November 1994: "All too clearly, the plan favoured the settlers and was intended to perpetuate the Israeli conquest of the Territories more effectually than before, by using 'control from outside'". (p. 167) Shahak is very critical of the Zionist left, such as the organization Peace Now, which "extolled this racist plan as 'a positive sign of implementation of the peace process'". (p.167) And for Meron Benvenisti was clear, that "Israel grants Arafat a semblance of a state, no relief can be expected in the conditions of oppression, control and exploitation". (p. 168)

The author sheds light on the ideological dimension of Zionist policy since the 1920s. "The laws of the State of Israel pertaining to the use of land are based on the principle of discrimination against all non-Jews. The State of Israel has turned most of the land in Israel (about 92 per cent) into 'state land'. After those lands are defined as owned by the State of Israel they can be leased for long periods only to Jews. The right to a long-term lease of such land is denied to all non-Jews without a single exception. This denial is enforced by placing all state lands under the administration by the Jewish National Fund, a branch of the World Zionist Organization, whose racist statutes forbid their long-term lease, or any use, to non-Jews." (p. 169) This land is leased for 49 years with an automatic renewal for another 49-year period. Sub-leasing to non-Jews is forbidden by the administrative authority. Land-leasing to non-Jews is only allowed for grazing and is limited to eleven months. Shahak debunks the allegedly "socialist" or "utopian" character of the collective settlements designated as kibbutzim (plural of kibbutz) and moshavim (plural of moshav), because only Jews are allowed to live in them. "Non-Jews who desire to become members of a kibbutz, even a kibbutz whose Jewish members are atheists, must convert to Judaism." (p. 170)

Shahak's book should prompt the U. S. and Western political elite not to adopt the Israeli anti-Iranian bias. Iran is in reality neither a threat to Israel nor to the West and much less to the U. S. Israel has several hundred nuclear weapons, the U. S. have over 5,000 and France and Great Britain also have quite a few. In 2007, a US National Intelligence Estimate stated that Iran had halted its military nuclear program in 2003. The Obama administration must do everything to prevent the warmongers from drawing the U. S. into another deadly adventure. A war against Iran would not be another "cakewalk", as assumed by the neocons. Shahak's book provides a deep insight into the true aims of Israel's foreign policy towards Iran. Studying it could prevent a looming war. A must read for everybody.

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