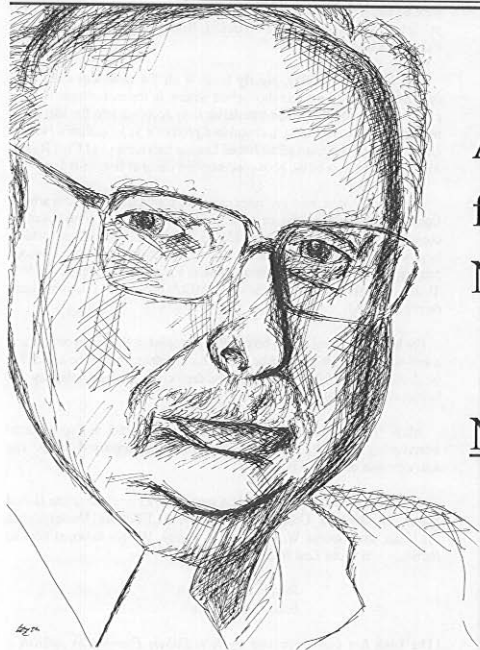


# *The Link*

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A Survivor  
for Whom  
Never Again  
*means*  
Never Again

An Interview with Israel Shahak by Mark Dow

—Begins on Page 3

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## About This Issue

In 1989, at the onset of the Palestinian uprising, when Israeli soldiers were breaking Palestinian bones as a matter of government policy, AMEU published a booklet entitled "Human Rights Violations During the Palestinian Uprising, 1988-89."

The book sold quickly, chiefly because all the violations cited were described by Israeli soldiers themselves writing in the mainstream Hebrew press, and because the person translating their accounts into English was a renowned Israeli chemist, a distinguished professor at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, and chairman of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights. And, yes, a survivor of the Nazi concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen.

Dr. Israel Shahak, now professor emeritus, continues to translate articles from the Hebrew press for an American audience—for a complimentary copy, please see page 5 for details. He has also just authored a book which, largely by word of mouth, has sent its London publisher into a quick second printing. (The book, "Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years," is available through AMEU's book/video program, found on pages 13-16).

For his efforts, Shahak has been called a prophet, a Renaissance man and a self-hating Jew. He'd rather be known for his ideas. Indeed, he asked that we devote more space to his thoughts on democracy, fascism, ethnicity and human rights than to the details of his personal life.

Mark Dow, a freelance writer, had never met Israel Shahak prior to interviewing him at his residence in Jerusalem on January 4, 1995. The interview was conducted in English.

Last year, Dr. Shahak completed a successful lecture tour of the United States, speaking at Columbia University, M.I.T., the University of Michigan, and George Washington University. We are honored now to introduce him to our *Link* readers.

John F. Mahoney  
Executive Director

*[The Link has been requested by Rev. Robert Hannum to publish a clarification of remarks he made to Grace Halsell that appeared in our January-March 1995 issue. His letter is found on page 10, along with a response by Grace Halsell.]*

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# An Interview with Israel Shahak in Jerusalem

■ An interview by Mark Dow at the home of Dr. Israel Shahak on January 4, 1995.

**Where in Poland were you raised?**

I was born in Warsaw in 1933. I was there all the time during the Second World War, during the Holocaust I mean, then finally almost two years in Bergen-Belsen. And because I was raised not only in an Orthodox [Jewish] but in a Zionist family, immediately after this I went to Palestine with my mother, who also survived. I arrived here in September 1945 as a 12-and-a-half-year-old child.

I was first educated in religious institutions, but then, because I went to Tel Aviv to be with my mother, and also because I began to develop some quarrels with my teachers, I transferred myself to secular high school. But I remained religious until the age of 18. Then the usual career of an Israeli Jewish boy—army, then university, and so on. Political activism only developed in '68.

**How many people from Bergen-Belsen survived?**

I don't know. The concentration camp was not a single entity. It was divided into very many areas separated from each other by barbed wire, heavily guarded, so I don't know anybody except my own group. I have seen masses of people through the barbed wire, but I have no idea about them.

From my own group I can tell you that 3,300 went in, and then by virtue of what is called selections—you know what it



**Interviewer Mark Dow**

means—we survived 250. But of course there have been not only Jews in Bergen-Belsen, there have been other groups. I have no idea what has happened with the other groups, except visual and casual impressions, so I can tell you only about my own group.

**How long were you in Bergen-Belsen?**

I arrived there the 29th of June 1943, and I was liberated on the 13th of April 1945 by the American army. But not in Bergen-Belsen itself. The last 7 days we spent in traveling, in being taken east, but it's not really important.

**Have you ever written anything about the camps?**

No. This is a question of personality type, and I am not inclined to writing autobiography. I am simply not made that way. My choosing of a scientific profes-

sion also points in the other direction, as does my type of writing. I think about it, I draw conclusions, but I am not inclined in any way to writing memoirs or autobiography.

**So what kind of conclusions are you drawing?**

The most important conclusion is that the people who operated the Holocaust machine, or the great majority of them, at least the casual operators whom I saw, German soldiers, did what they did simply from the sense of duty, not because of any hatred, simply from the sense of duty. The great majority of every society, if they will find themselves given an order by a government which is legal, will do the same thing which they did. I don't exclude anyone from this. And therefore the conclusion is that every society and every people is in danger of being nazified.

I'm not thinking now about lynchings and pogroms, which are a completely different thing because they are temporary. I mean exterminating by state power. I mean a bureaucratic operation conducted by state officials and by ordinary soldiers or officials to exterminate people by state decision. I will also include lesser decisions of the same type, let us say, to round up all the Japanese in the United States during the Second World War, or the Armenian extermination, or what is happening in Bosnia.

This can happen everywhere. And it *has* happened everywhere. I completely deny the opinion that the Holocaust is unique. It is rare, it is true, it is

rare. But it has happened. Therefore the first conclusion is that it can happen again, and every person and every group of people has to be on guard against it. Although the Holocaust happened to Jews, it is a lesson for all humanity, including the Jews themselves.

I will add that the lesson is universal because we shouldn't think about most of those who operated the extermination machines as animals, as monsters in human form. We should reserve this appellation only for the actual planners, or for the heads of the Nazis. The ordinary German soldiers who guarded us while we dwindled from more than 3,000 to 250 were, in my manner of judgment, people like you and me, motivated by what is thought of in every society as good motives, obeying orders from a legal government. Nevertheless, they were, objectively, murderers and exterminators.

The conclusion is that human society in every group is composed of a mass of ordinary people who can become exterminators, but who in their ordinary lives are completely usual people, of a minority which protests, and a minority which plans murders or enjoys murder.

*You made me think of Primo Levi's work.*

Yes, among the very few works on the Holocaust which I really enjoyed and of which I strongly approve are Primo Levi's books. Most of the things, and I here mean memoirs, autobiographies, and so on, written about this, I don't like at all, but Primo Levi is really an exception.

*And he's also a chemist.*

He's also a chemist, of course. But I must say, without boasting, I have drawn my conclusions before reading, independently of Primo Levi. But it is true that his work on this is completely unique and I think his is the truest, so far as I have seen, approach.

*You were saying before that you had some arguments early on with your teachers, but it wasn't until later, when you were about 18, that you broke with Orthodoxy. What were those arguments about?*

Let me give you an example. We were studying the Talmudic laws of shabbat—what constitutes a violation of shabbat? And

**“Therefore the first conclusion is that it can happen again, and every person and every group of people has to be on guard against it. Although the Holocaust happened to Jews, it is a lesson for all humanity, including the Jews themselves.”**

we reached the subject of riding a horse. The Talmud says that although it is permitted to ride a horse by itself—it is not included in the 39 prohibited labors—it is still not allowed, because a rider may take a branch from a tree in order to beat the horse. I accepted the possibility.

At the end of every lesson, we always had additions about modern applications. So when we finished with the horse and so on, the teacher told us that it is prohibited to ride a bicycle be-

cause it is similar to riding a horse. At this point, I raised my hand, and I said, “Oh, teacher, I know the reason. It is because we are afraid that the rider will take a branch from a tree in order to beat up the bicycle.”

The teacher's response was to give me two big slaps on my face, which was the usual method of education. This was a quite enlightened institution, by the way, a German one, and there were actually boys and girls in the same school, but still this was their reaction—and there were many things of that kind.

After slapping me the teacher told me, your question came by instigation of Satan, of the Devil. Since I was a believer at that time, I repented of this, as I had after each such question of details. I accepted the principle. I had a difficult period in which I searched my conscience for how I was guilty of what the teachers were telling me that I was guilty of—asking bad questions, thinking impure thoughts.

I had to go to Tel Aviv for family reasons anyway, and I decided that maybe it would be better if I would not be slapped on my face every few weeks for asking details. So I transferred myself to secular school, but took lessons in Talmud, and also pursued my studies without being slapped on my face.

*When you were talking about the way that any society can become nazified, I wondered if you were thinking of Israel.*

Not necessarily so, not necessarily so. I really mean every society. At present, although there is a danger in Israel, it is much less so than in Rwanda, or plenty of

other places that I could mention. No, I was mentioning universal principles.

But since you mention this, I will go further. This I didn't draw from my personal Holocaust experience, but by reading about German history, which began much later when I was in my mid-thirties. I began to be interested in German history in general, and in the history of modern Germany in particular, to see from where Nazism arose. And from where in Nazism the extermination of the Jews arose. From the beginning it was clear to me, even from superficial work, that for twenty years the official Nazi program was only the expulsion of Jews from Germany. Purification or cleansing, as they used to say. Germany without Jews.

So it immediately drew my attention to the fact that there are Jews, in fact organized and recognized parties—not only the Kahanes, but the Moledet party and other tendencies—who want to expel all the Arabs from the Land of Israel. [*Kahanes are the followers of Brooklyn-born rabbi Meir Kahane. The Kach party he founded is made up of young American Jews who specialize in terrorizing Palestinians. The Moledet Party, founded in 1987 by retired Gen. Rehavam Ze'evi, champions the physical removal of Palestinians from their ancestral lands.* — Ed.]

Such tendencies were very strong in the Labor movement, in the Zionist movement, in the beginning. Because of this, I am saying that there are Jewish Nazis. Jews who are officially saying that Arabs should be expelled from Israel, or from the Occupied Territories, are, in my opinion, Jewish Nazis. And there are Nazi-like tendencies in Judaism, meaning toleration for

people who in their official program desire that all Arabs be expelled.

But this is not unique to Jews. I specified it for Jews, but it is not unique to Jews. We see it before our own eyes in Bosnia.

*Sometimes when your work is distributed in the States—I think particularly when the American Educational Trust distributed the translations—they have a little biographical note mentioning that you are a Holocaust survivor—[See the notice elsewhere on this page about Dr. Shahak's translations from the Hebrew press. — Ed.]*

Yes, I know —

*--and I assume this is because they think it gives you a sort of credential to say what you say about Israel.*

Yes, yes. I dislike this, but I also

Link readers wishing a free sample of Dr. Shahak's translations from the Hebrew press, along with subscription information, should write to:

From the Hebrew Press  
Middle East Data Center  
P.O. Box 337  
Woodbridge, VA  
22194-0337

While Israeli newspapers do have military censorship, they have very little self-censorship. Many news items that U.S. editors reject as anti-Israeli or anti-Semitic are published freely in Israel's mainstream Hebrew newspapers.

don't like to quarrel with my friends who are sometimes the only distributors, so after asking them and receiving an answer that for their own security, for their own protection, they want this, I agreed to it. You have seen that when I distribute my work I don't add any biographical detail.

*Just your name.*

Just my name, yes. If I add something for my protection, I am adding only the fact that I am an Israeli citizen who has lived here from 1945. I may even add sometimes that I served in the Israeli army all the times that I had to serve. This, in my opinion, is a much stronger protection of my credibility than being a Holocaust survivor. It's a protection because it means that, first of all, I am behaving according to Israeli law. I am accepting all the duties imposed on me by Israeli law. Second, it means that I am willing to defend Israel if it will be faced by external danger—that until the age when I was not fit for military service, or, as a matter of fact, in an emergency even now if a foreign army, if an Arab army, will invade Israel, I will of course take a weapon in my hand and shoot. This means something much different.

*When you first came here in 1945, what were your thoughts about Arabs and Jews living together, or about the idea of a Jewish state?*

I was a complete Zionist, or a Ben Gurionist, I should say. I was a great admirer of Ben Gurion until 1956, until I was more than 23 years old. I accepted all the doctrine of Ben Gurion, meaning the official doctrine of Ben Gurion. First of all, I ac-

cepted what he said, that the Land of Israel belongs to Jews. That Arabs should be given only personal rights and limited by security considerations, but should have neither national rights nor any rights which hinder Jewish settlement. For example, during the years from '48 to '56, I fully accepted the confiscation of Arab-owned land for the benefit of Jews. Of course, this was also my teachers' ideas, but nevertheless it took much, much time until I liberated myself from those principles, which I fully professed.

*In the book "Jewish History, Jewish Religion", you say that you changed your mind when Ben Gurion gave a speech on the third day of the Suez War in 1956, saying "that the real reason for [the war] is 'the restoration of the kingdom of David and Solomon' to its Biblical borders."*

Yes, because after I ceased to be an Orthodox Jew, or even, I can say, a religious Jew, meaning a believer in revelation, I accepted those ideas on secular grounds—as Ben Gurion, who never quoted religion, propounded them. It came to me as a very great surprise that Ben Gurion suddenly began to quote Bible. This impressed me much more at the time than the fact of the invasion of Egypt in the Suez War.

In my book I make a division between strategic aims, however bad, pursued on secular grounds, and the same aims pursued on religious grounds. I say that while with secular imperialism I can have a dialogue—I of course oppose it—with religious imperialism, or ideological imperialism, there is no possibility of dialogue. I am against any ex-

treme ideology which will not, let us say, take into account pragmatic considerations. Secular imperialism takes them into account; religious imperialism and pacifism on the other side, do not.

*Let's jump to very recent developments. At the end of your book you say: "What is not possible, as long as Israel remains a 'Jewish state,' is the Israeli grant of a fake, but nevertheless symbolically real sovereignty, or even of real autonomy, to non-Jews within the Land of Israel for merely political reasons."*

Yes, exactly. I wrote that before the Oslo Agreement, by the way. I had the opportunity to change it, and I decided not to. And you see it exactly. You see that on the question of confiscation of land,

and what is worse, of saying that land once confiscated is only for the benefit of Jews, the State of Israel didn't make any compromise. So I am saying that all the Oslo Agreement is a fake. Both sides—of course I am very strongly against Arafat as well—both sides cheat each other.

*So you don't think that the Palestinians are even going to get a symbolic sovereignty out of this?*

Of course not. There are many facts, symbolic facts, if you want. Israel, for example, insists that Arafat will not call himself, in communication to Israel, "President," but only "Chairman of the P.L.O.," And in the negotiations, one of the Israeli conditions is that what Palestinians

### Only for the Benefit of the Jews

I deplore that Hillel Cohen omits what I would consider to be the most important point from his story of the land robbed from the villagers of Al Khader (*Kol Ha'ir*, January 6). After the confiscated land is announced to belong to the State of Israel, it is officially designated for use by the Jews only. It is not only the Palestinians (including those among them who serve in the Israeli army, police and Shabak) who do not have the right to use such land. The racist regulations of the Jewish National Fund, which is in charge of such matters, also prohibit its lease or any other use to any non-Jews.

In my view, the thus institutionalized racism exceeds in importance the robbing of the land from the Palestinians. There are many states which systematically robbed land. The U.S., for example, robbed Indian land, transforming most of it into state land. Nevertheless, such land is now available for use by any U.S. citizen. If a Jew in the U.S. were prohibited to lease land belonging to the state only because he were Jewish, this would be rightly interpreted as anti-Semitism.

Unless we recognize the real issue—which is the racist character of the Zionist movement and the State of Israel and the roots of that racism in Jewish religious law [*Halacha*]-we will not be able to understand our realities. And unless we can understand them, we will not be able to change them.

— Israel Shahak's letter in the Israeli newspaper *Kol Ha'ir*

may elect—I don't think there will be elections, but anyhow—that whatever will be elected will not be called Parliament or House of Commons, but only "administrative council." And so on and on. There are very many Israeli conditions, official conditions, which are intended to prevent this. If you want more than this, then immediately after Oslo, Rabin said in the Knesset that he accepts this accord with five no's which were proposed by Likud and others; he didn't want the Knesset to vote on them. One of the no's—it is also embodied in the Labor Party program—is: never a Palestinian state. There is only a very small minority of people within Israel who are for a Palestinian state. The people who are most against it are religious, meaning Orthodox Jews. Of course Rabin is in an alliance with them.

*What do you think is going to happen now?*

More of the same. The peace process will be seen in the near future as being a fake. Not because of Arafat, but because of the Palestinian popular opposition. Al Khader was not initiated by Arafat but by the villagers of Al Khader, and there will be more like this. [Al Khader is a Palestinian village in the Bethlehem area. In December, 1994, Jews attempted to settle on a mountain belonging to the village. Faced with strong local protests from Palestinians and Israelis (see Dr. Shahak's letter to an Israeli newspaper on page 6), the Israeli government halted the settlement construction. However, instead of giving the land back to the Palestinians, the government retained it as a "military zone" and gave the settlers another mountain to settle on within the same village. —Ed.] Or if you want something more symbolic: the Israeli

police have prevented a Palestinian organization from holding a press conference in the middle of Jerusalem. So it is more of the same. The Oslo agreement and all the ceremonies were an exercise in disinformation. Both sides—I emphasize both sides, because Arafat also didn't want to do anything the Oslo agreement obliged him to—both sides intended to deceive each other.

There is another argument, and a very strong one. Israel is a

**"When the Begin government wanted to invade Lebanon, then for half a year or more, day and night, it told the Israeli people, we are going to invade Lebanon. The press was full of this; it was not a secret. And the same with every major policy. You can say many things about the Israeli government, but its aims are always announced more or less openly."**

democratic state—for Israelis, but especially for Jews. In a democratic state, you have to announce a plan that you are going to pursue. You cannot therefore pursue a Palestinian state in stealth. You have to say to the people, or at least to the significant minority of the people in Israel who are interested in politics, who read the papers, who hear the political programs—you must know that people in Israel are much more political than in the United States, more interested in national politics—so you have to tell them what you intend to do. The Israeli government generally does, for good and for bad.

When the Begin government wanted to invade Lebanon, then for half a year or more, day and night, it told the Israeli people, we are going to invade Lebanon. The press was full of this; it was not a secret. And the same with every major policy. You can say many things about the Israeli government, but its aims are always announced more or less openly. Only the timing is usually secret.

I never accused Rabin of deceiving people. Rabin is trying only to implement the official Labor Party program on which he was elected in 1992. In his official program he said that he wants a separation of two peoples; the Palestinians will rule themselves in densely inhabited areas, and that we, our army, will watch them from the outside. This is exactly what is happening. Maybe Rabin and Peres are deceiving foreigners, which is quite another thing, but they are not deceiving Israelis.

*Is the solution you support a secular Palestinian state and a secular Israeli state?*

I will support any program so long as it is democratic. Democratic means an agreement of the majority of the two peoples. At present, all programs are unrealistic, meaning the conquest regime will continue.

But if you will ask me, what is most realistic, in a very minimal sense, it is still the two-state solution, an Israeli state and a Palestinian state.

I hope that a Palestinian state will be secular and democratic. But because of Arafat and his Fatah organization, if by any miracle a Palestinian state will be established—which I don't believe—but if—it will be a dictatorial state. I think Arafat is intend-

ing to establish a worse dictatorship than Assad's in Syria. So in fact, I think that the Israeli advantage, pragmatic advantage, is that there is no strong movement for democracy in Arab countries.

*But for many years weren't many people saying that the P.L.O. was a democracy, even if it didn't have a state?*

Well, I never said it, but I will give you very good proof that it was never a democracy. For many years, fifteen or twenty years, Arafat keeps all the money of the P.L.O. under his personal control, in fact in his name. Democracy has developed from the power of the purse, meaning that no executive ruler is allowed to keep all the money under his possession. Therefore it was never a democracy.

*What does that do to the peace camp's claim for many years, and the Palestinians' own claim, as I understood it, that the P.L.O. was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people?*

I never said it. I believe this claim was one of the illusions, of the many illusions, of the leftists. Very many leftists all over the world have a tendency to beautify the victims. I, on the contrary, say that while supporting the rights of the victims, and certainly trying to prevent suffering as much as one can, one has to say the truth.

The P.L.O. has never been a democracy, and has never been the sole representative of the Palestinian people. The P.L.O. in the Arab world got its recognition as sole representative of the Palestinian people from the Arab League in 1974. Why should I recognize the Sultan of Oman as having the capacity to say who

represents the Palestinian people?

When they [the P.L.O.] were in power in Lebanon, quite big areas of Lebanon, I didn't see that they tried to hold elections. They always imposed their activists. Now when there is a so-called autonomy, nobody prevents Arafat from holding municipal elections for the town of Gaza and several others, but no, he appointed municipalities.

It is obvious that the P.L.O. doesn't represent the Palestinian people. There is Hamas. I can be the strongest enemy of Hamas, but I cannot deny that it exists. The P.L.O. never solely represented the Palestinian people, but only a part of it, and what part is a matter of dispute.

The Israeli commentators, and even Rabin and Peres, say quite openly that the most important part of the Oslo agreement was to impose Arafat as the ruler of the Palestinian people. After all, before Arafat entered Gaza, Palestinians or Gazans were not asked about it. It is not like, let us say, the goal of the British liberating the African colonies. Because in each case, except Algeria in which there was a civil war, there were elections. And then they gave the colony to whomever was elected. Here there were no elections. It was not like in South Africa, where also there were first elections. Imagine that de Klerk, without holding any elections, would have given power to Nelson Mandela. Obviously, democracy is based on elections, and on free elections. You cannot escape from it.

*Let me ask you about Israel as a Jewish state. What are the limitations of how Israeli policies*

*toward Palestinians can change as long as Israel is a Jewish state? And what would it mean for Israel to exist as a state that is not a Jewish state.*

The sense of democracy, which means renunciation of the Jewish character of the Jewish state, means for the Jews to base their claims exclusively on the democratic rights of Jews living here, and not on anything proceeding from Jewish heritage. We have certain rights, which can be a matter of dispute, but only be-

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**"Every state confiscates land, and I cannot on principle deny the right of the state of Israel to confiscate a piece of land . . . What I can deny is that once the state of Israel confiscates land, it only gives it to Jews."**

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cause we live here. But this also applies to Arabs, of course. I don't recognize any democratic rights of Arabs [simply] because this country was for many hundreds of years an Arab or Muslim country. So it was. Actually, the entire Turkey was for many thousands of years, until 900 years ago, a Christian country. So what? Christians should take it? Or actually Palestine was also for several hundreds of years a Christian country. So what? Being not a Jewish state doesn't only mean removal of discrimination between Jews and non-Jews, but it also means that all rights should be based on the present.

Actually, I learned much of this from the history of the United States, because the right of Americans to their independence from



Britain was based on the present. In the past they had no rights because they were a British colony. All the past was on the side of King George III. Upon what is the Declaration of Independence of the United States based? On the present? Or on abstract principles? On the present situation. We *now* don't want taxation without representation. We *now* want independence because we live here and we have decided. Precedent was on the side of the British, but the present will was on the side of the Americans. So therefore democracy is based on repudiation of rights of the past to control the present.

*How does the issue of land confiscation fit in here?*

The most important thing for me is not the confiscation of land. It's not the fact that people claim that they own property and it was confiscated. It is the fact that after the land is confiscated and becomes the property of the state of Israel, it is rented or sold to Jews only.

Every state confiscates land, and I cannot on principle deny the right of the state of Israel to confiscate a piece of land, at least until I investigate the circumstances. What I can deny is that once the state of Israel confiscates land, it only gives it to Jews.

Let us take the Al Khader thing. In the agreement of the government with the settlers as it stands today, two things were said. The first thing was that the settlers will build on another hill. But the second thing is that the vacated hill will become an Israeli army stronghold. So I ask why the vacated hill will not be given back to the villagers. Because of the principle that confiscated land

should remain Jewish. This is the principle that I isolate for my opposition.

Empty land, confiscated of course from Arabs in the first place, is used only for Jewish development. Let us say there is an Arab village and near it a kibbutz, and in the middle a piece of empty land belonging to the state. The Israeli principle is that the Arab village will remain with what it has, but the kibbutz or another Jewish settlement may receive the empty land.

In the United States, there would be a debate based on rational or pseudo-rational principles: what will happen with the land, maybe it will be divided in two, maybe there will be some consideration that one settlement has a hundred members, one settlement has 20,000 members—but in principle the empty land belonging to the state is serving all citizens. In Israel the empty land is serving only Jews. This is the point that I am isolating.

If Israel will become not a Jewish state, then the empty land belonging to the state will be used for the equal development of all its citizens. Which will mean in many places that it will be given to Arabs, because Arabs have been denied the possibility to develop for many years. They are surrounded by plots of empty land.

*How would you answer people who would be concerned that if land could go to any citizen, that eventually the Jews in Israel would be threatened by the Arabs in Israel?*

I think not. First of all, we are more than 80%. We are more developed. I am speaking, of course, pragmatically. Not only

is the military power overwhelmingly in our hands, because most of the Arabs don't serve in the army—I would like to change this—but even then, I will answer you that so long as Arabs will not become democratic, they cannot threaten us. Because democracy is a source of military strength.

Democracy trusts its own people to serve in the army. The Arab states, and also the Arab movements, Palestinian movements like the P.L.O. and Hamas, trust only the loyalists. The active forces of Fatah or of Hamas correspond exactly to Arab armies which are limited in number and divided into well-equipped forces, like the Iraqi Republican Guard of Saddam Hussein or the Saudi National Guard, which are very loyal to the regime and receive special benefits, and a mass of untrained soldiers whom you have seen on TV in Kuwait. In [the Gulf War] the Republican Guard was kept near Baghdad to keep the regime.

The same thing happens in Fatah and Hamas. There is no attempt, except during the intifada, to train all the people or to involve all the people, but to act through small groups very loyal to the leadership. This is not a military threat. With all my grief about the bomb in Dizengoff Street in Tel Aviv and other incidents, those things are not threatening us. Terror doesn't threaten a military power.

At the moment, so long as Arabs and especially Palestinians will not become democratic, we don't have any real threat from them. I don't include terror as a real threat because no society is threatened by outside terror.

I hope very much that when the

Arabs will become democratic, we'll establish neighborly relations. I will begin really to think about it when they will become democratic, for which I am sorry to say there is no sign.

*I want to ask you about the connection between your critique of Judaism and anti-Semitism. You say very clearly in your book that you feel it's necessary to fight Jewish chauvinism and anti-Semitism together.*

Yes. First of all, anti-Semitism is a form of chauvinism. We look on anti-Semitism from the Jewish side, but of course for anti-Semites themselves, they are against the Jews for their own chauvinistic reasons. They want to be exclusive Germans or exclusive Aryans or exclusive [whatever], so, therefore, you already have the same thing.

Secondly, Jewish chauvinism wants to do to non-Jews what anti-Semites want to do to Jews, so obviously the fight must go together.

The third reason is that one has to beware of going into extremism, which means of adopting anti-Semitic opinions through a critique of Judaism. The best way of avoiding it, even unconsciously, is to go fighting anti-Semitism. So you make a clear distinction between these. But I would say that of the three considerations that I gave you, the most important is that anti-Semitism is a form of chauvinism, and if I am against Jewish chauvinism, I must be also against anti-Jewish chauvinism.

*Are you concerned with the use that anti-Semites could make*

## Clarification

To the Editor:

On page 8 of the article, "In the Land of Christ Christianity is Dying" [Link, January-March 1995], I'd like to correct some inaccuracies in my statements.

Educational Opportunities uses both Israeli and Palestinian guides, and does not fly El Al exclusively. They use Israeli hotels on the West Side, and also one East Jerusalem hotel. I do not believe that Israel has any ownership at all in Educational Opportunities, nor do I believe that Jim Ridgeway has a home in West Jerusalem. I did not say that Methodist bishops are in the "Zionist" camp.

We appreciate the article and have great respect for the distinguished contribution Ms. Halsell has made, and *The Link* has made, toward a deeper understanding of the Middle East.

Rev. Robert W. Hannum  
Jerusalem

## Ms. Halsell Replies:

Rev. Hannum's original comments were made to me in a taped interview I conducted with him and his wife, Margaret. Now, by way of recantation, he says that Educational Opportunities does not fly El Al exclusively; what he fails to say is that the other airline often used by E.O., Tower Airlines, is Israeli-owned. Rev. Hannum now says that E.O. uses a hotel in East Jerusalem; what he fails to say is that the hotel, the Seven Arches, is Israeli-owned. Rev. Hannum now says that E.O. uses both Israeli and Palestinian guides; what he fails to say is that there are approximately 4,000 Israeli guides and 44 Arab Christian guides, and that Israel refuses to grant licenses to new Arab guides, so that in time there'll be few, if any, Christian guides in the land of Christ.

On March 7 of this year, eight church leaders, led by Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore, President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, urged President Clinton "to press Israel to stop expanding its presence in Jerusalem . . . for the sake of the Christian population of Jerusalem and the region, whose historic presence has dwindled so dramatically in recent years." How many Methodist bishops on the Advisory Council to E.O. will add their voices to this cry for help on behalf of a dying Christian community? How many will have the courage of the Israeli human rights champion, profiled in this issue of *The Link*, to publicly condemn the present Zionist Government of Israel for what Dr. Shahak calls its nazi-like policies in Occupied Palestine?

Personally, I think Rev. Hannum had it right the first time.

Grace Halsell  
Washington, D.C.

*of your book?*

I decided not to be concerned. I decided that my duty, and the duty of every person, is to say what he thinks without taking any account of what use may be made of his statements. And this for two reasons.

I will begin with the pragmatic reason. The pragmatic reason is that in my opinion, the chief reason why so much of the left in the 20th century has failed is that it adopted the principle of not criticizing its friends or supposed friends. Many leftists have either avoided criticizing the Soviet Union under Stalin completely, or criticized it only moderately, or said, it is bad but we are also bad, but we are less bad. And in the same way, the extreme right avoided for many years criticizing South Africa. So the pragmatic reason here comes first.

The ideological reason comes second, which is that I decided that it is not possible to criticize Judaism or any other system which needs criticizing, without giving ammunition to its unprincipled elements.

For example, a black Nazi in the United States—and there are, of course, black Nazis in the United States—can take the books of my friend Noam Chomsky and use them not for the purpose for which Chomsky wrote them, but to say that all whites are evil. Chomsky says almost nothing about the evils of [black racist] ideology or black rulers of pre-colonial [times], he concentrates almost entirely on whites. So a black Nazi can use this. Is this a reason for Chomsky not to write as he does? No.

Or take the book of Bertrand

Russell about his visit to Lenin's Russia in 1920. This book, which is the first important and principled critique of the communist regime before Stalin, was used by many rabid conservatives. And I will give you out of many examples the examples of the great prophets of Judaism. It is true that many enemies of Judaism—Christian enemies first of all, Christian anti-Semites—used to take the condemnation of Old Testament prophets and shout: see, all the Jews were wicked.

By the way, my work as a human rights activist was used by many

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**“... the duty of every person, is to say what he thinks without taking any account of what use may be made of his statements. . . . It is not possible to criticize Judaism or any other system which needs criticizing, without giving ammunition to its unprincipled elements.”**

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enemies of Israel. One of my early memoranda about oppression in the territories was taken by the Iraqi ambassador and circulated in the United Nations, and circulated for many years as an Iraqi official document. You know very well that reports of Amnesty International about torture in various countries are being used not by the friends of human rights, but by enemies of that particular country. South Africa, when it was an apartheid regime, used to take Amnesty reports about black African countries, and circulate them: see

what black independence leads to. So you see again it is pragmatic. It is not possible to make a real criticism of any movement or any state or any group which will not give ammunition to its enemies.

*You mentioned Chomsky, and I wanted to ask your opinion of the influence of organized American Jews on Israeli policy—*

There is no influence. There is only influence on American policy, not on Israeli policy. On this I differ [with him]. We remain friends, but we also have a correspondence which is full of our differences. I think there is practically no influence. There may be influence only if Gush Emunim will rebel openly against the Israeli government, and Gush Emunim is funded from the United States. [*Gush Emunim, a Jewish mystical-Messianic movement, aims to confiscate all Palestinian lands even if this means civil war within Israel.*—Ed.]

There is no influence for the reason that at least until Oslo, and to a great extent even now, most American Jews will accept everything that the Israeli government has decided. The majority of American Jewish leaders after Oslo changed instantly from regarding Arafat as the greatest enemy to regarding him as a friend. So if they are so loyal, so unconditionally loyal, there is no influence.

*Actually, I misstated my question. I guess that's another disagreement. I think that Chomsky feels the influence of organized American Jews on U.S. policy is small, that their opinion happens to coincide with American interests—*

Yes, this is a very strong differ-

ence between me and him, because I don't accept his model about American policy detailed in every way from the late 40's and then continuing as if programmed by computer. I think that even the main lines are not followed exactly. In the Middle East and in many other areas, the United States can change because of domestic pressures. Eisenhower actually was against Israel and, in my opinion, compelled Israel to retreat from all the territories after the Suez War. And, by the way, he refused to sell any weapons to Israel during the [war].

So actually the new American policy of supporting Israel began under John Kennedy, and it is mainly characteristic of the Democratic party. When Reagan saw the Israeli bombardment of Beirut on TV, he picked up his phone and ordered Begin to stop, and it was stopped in fifteen minutes. I don't believe that Carter or Clinton would have done this.

So I disagree, as you say, I disagree. There is a very strong influence of organized Jews—I always use the word organized Jews in this context—which is especially powerful in the Democratic party, and almost negligible among the Republicans. The four presidents who have strongly supported Israel are very exactly Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Carter, and Clinton. The Republican presidents in between really conducted imperialistic policy in which Israel was sometimes supported and sometimes not supported.

If you want another example, Kissinger—because, of course, Kissinger for my purposes is a Republican, he's a servant of a Republican administration. Kiss-

inger, during the Yom Kippur War of '73 waited for seven days, and withstood all the Israeli applications and requests for aid, until he thought that Israel was weakened enough, and then he waited, and then he gave limited aid, and then he began to send unlimited aid I think on the 13th or 12th day of the war. So the policy of Kissinger—of Nixon and Kissinger—was actually an example of limited support to Israel, conditioned by American imperial interests. You can also take Reagan. I gave you the ex-

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**“ . . . most American Jews will accept everything that the Israeli government has decided. The majority of American Jewish leaders after Oslo changed instantly from regarding Arafat as the greatest enemy to regarding him as a friend. So if they are so loyal, so unconditionally loyal, there is no influence [on Israeli policy].”**

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ample with Beirut, but also Reagan forced the sale of AWAC planes to Saudi Arabia against the furious opposition of Israel and organized Jewry in the United States, by a very split vote in the Senate.

*The AWAC example is what makes Chomsky's theory seem reasonable to me, because in spite of what organized Jews wanted—*

This is where my point comes. The organized Jews don't have much clout with the Republican party. First of all, because Re-

publicans have enough money without them and Democrats don't. The Democratic party is funded to a very great extent by Jewish donors. And secondly, because of the social character of the top Republicans. And not only top Republicans but also those who tend to vote Republican, or a straight ticket. They are not very much influenced by the Holocaust, by emotional reasoning, they are influenced by one thing, business. Like I think Coolidge said, what is good for business is good for the United States.

The Democratic party is quite different. First of all, it needs money. Secondly, and perhaps equally important, many of the people who are supporting Democrats are conditioned, positively conditioned, to regard what can be represented as human suffering. I don't mean now that politicians will do much about it, but certainly Democrats are more concerned about, let's say, health care and so on. So with a sufficient amount of propaganda, they can be made concerned about Jews as sufferers. Republicans not.

This is, by the way a third difference—that for Chomsky, of course, there is no difference between Democrats and Republicans; for me, there is. Maybe the difference is limited, but there is. It goes both ways. Only Republicans could make peace with China. It was Nixon who went to China. Not Kennedy or Lyndon Johnson. But there is, there is a difference.

*It's small, but it's there.*

No, it is not small, even in my opinion. It is only limited, but I will not call it small. ■

**A DEATH IN JERUSALEM: The Assassination by Jewish Extremists of the First Arab/Israeli Peacemaker**

*Kati Marton, Pantheon Books, 1995, 321 pp., cloth.*

With jacket blurbs from Jim Lehrer, Diane Sawyer and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and a good New York Times review by Clyde Haberman, this tale of terror clearly points to Yitzhak Shamir, Israel's former Prime Minister, as ordering U.N. negotiator Count Bernadotte's death, and to Yhoshua Cohen, a close friend in later life of Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, as the trigger man. Evidence also reveals that Shamir's Stern Gang had proposed to the Nazis that they work together to defeat the British.

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*Albert Hourani, Harvard Univ. Press, 1991, 551 pp., cloth.*

Elegant history of the whole Arab world from pre-Islamic Arabia to contemporary times.

**JEWISH HISTORY, JEWISH RELIGION: The Weight of Three Thousand Years**

*Israel Shahak, foreword by Gore Vidal, Pluto Press, 1994, 140 pp., paper.*

Israeli scholar and human rights activist argues that unless Israel confronts its Talmudic past it will continue as an apartheid state and an obstacle to peace.

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*Norman Cantor, HarperCollins, 1995, 474 pp., cloth.*

The author, an historian at New York University, focuses on the mainstream rabbinic tradition that re-created Jewish religion after the destruction of the Second Temple. What kept Jews together, he argues, was the Talmud, the "sacred chain" of laws, which isolated western Jews within a racist worldview. This is the worldview that western Jews took with them to Palestine, says Cantor. Israel, he holds, is the creation of kibbutznik pioneers and billionaire patriarchs in the Diaspora who kept the settlers financially afloat.

**JERUSALEM IN HISTORY**

*K. Asali, ed., Olive Branch Press, 1990, 192 pp., illustrated, cloth.*

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**AN AMERICAN FEMINIST IN PALESTINE: The Intifada Years**

*Shera B. Gluck, Temple Univ. Press, 1994, 237 pp., paper.*

In 1988, Gluck and her husband were strolling down an East Jerusalem street when Israeli police lobbed tear gas at them. A Palestinian tea shop owner pulled them into his store. For the daughter of a U.S. rabbi, it was unsettling to be "running away from Jews and protected by Arabs." Four visits later, Gluck came to know many Palestinians and the full horror of the military yoke they still bear.

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*Don Wagner, foreword by Elias Chacour, 1995, 253 pp., paper.*

Gripping testimony by one who has made a difference in easing the pain of the oppressed. Includes chronology of Middle Eastern Christianity.

**WHO ARE GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST? What Christians are not being told about Israel and Palestine**

Gary Burge, Zondervan Press, 1993, 201 pp., paper.

This professor of New Testament at Wheaton College begins his book: "Once, after reading Hal Lindsey's 'Late Great Planet Earth,' I stood in the Valley of Armageddon and reflected on Israel's fulfillment of prophecy. Surely God was at work in this place." Two hundred pages later, the author, an Evangelical Christian, concludes: "A prophetic voice needs to be heard today in the Middle East. . . . Israel has forgotten the voice of God." Between these quotes, Burge answers the "hard" questions: How can an all just God sanction the theft of someone else's land? How can an all merciful God condition His return on the slaughter of innocent human beings?

**BEFORE THEIR DIASPORA: A Photographic History of the Palestinians, 1876-1948**

W. Khalidi, Institute for Palestine Studies, 1991, 351 pp., paper.

Author's text and 474 photos make this a monumental celebration of Palestinian culture and history. Six full-color maps also trace the Zionist colonization of Palestine from 1878 to 15 May 1948.

**LEBANON: New Light in an Ancient Land**

Elsa Maarston, Burdett/Dillon Press, 1995, 127 pp., cloth.

Delightful, informative survey of Lebanon's history, culture and geography, with separate chapters on Lebanese Americans and the Arabic language, plus a selected bibliography for children and adults.

**THE FALSE PROPHET: Rabbi Meir Kahane, from FBI Informant to Knesset Member**

Robert Friedman, Lawrence Hill, 1990, 282 pp., cloth.

Documents Kahane's ties to terrorist acts in the U.S. and to leading Americans.

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Georgetown University professor explores the vitality of Islam as a global force whose diversity belies the western assumption that Islam is a hostile, monolithic religion.

**U.S. POLICY ON PALESTINE: From Wilson to Clinton**

Michael Suleiman, ed., AAUG, 1995, 263 pp., paper.

Contributors include Fred Lawson on Truman, Deborah Gerner on Eisenhower, Zaha Bustami on Kennedy-Johnson, Donald Neff on Nixon, Janice Terry on Carter, Ann Lesch on Reagan, Cheryl Rubenberg on Bush, Joe Stork on Clinton, with an excellent summary by Ibrahim Abu-Lughod.

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Marc Ellis, John Knox Press, 1994, 162 pp., paper.

Leading Jewish theologian's visit to Auschwitz leads him to write about Israel and the end of Jewish innocence, Palestine in the Jewish imagination, and the future of Jewish-Christian relations.

**THE ARAB CHRISTIAN: A History in the Middle East**

Kenneth Cragg, Westminster, 1991, 336 pp., cloth.

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*Grace Halsell, Macmillan, 1981, 193 pp., paper.*

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*Akiva Orr, Pluto Press, 1994, 180 pp., paper.*

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*Howard Sachar, Alfred Knopf, 1992, 1,051 pp., cloth.*

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*Edited by R. Tekiner, et al., Amana Books, 1988, 299 pp., cloth.*

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