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Dror Moreh: The Gatekeepers

Skrevet den 14-01-2013 18:09:34 af Tue Steen Müller

This Academy Award Nominee 2013 – and it was also nominated for the main prize at idfa in November 2012 – has troubled my mind for days since I watched it. Which I did a couple of times.

Why? Because it is so well crafted and effectively told? Yes, but many films *are*. Because it gives you an intelligent, mature, open-minded and critical insight to a world that you did not know about? Through (again) an effective use of storytelling elements that give you associations to fiction thrillers that takes place in the fascinating world of secret agents? Yes, but is that a sufficient explanation? No, it is not, it all comes down to the talking faces, the six former heads of Shin Bet, the Israeli internal secret service (contrary to Mossad, the external), and to *what* they say, and to *how* they say it. Seldom have *talking faces* been so well situated, you listen and you watch and you get the director's description and interpretation "in-between" the faces – rooms full of computer-screens with faces and names, air shots on targets, archive corridors of drawers with cards of suspected terrorists AND unique archive material of Palestinians being arrested and led to interrogations. As well as the known archive with Arafat and Rabin shaking hands with Clinton in the middle, and all the material around the murder of Rabin etc. And excellent computer graphic work that is used to give life to photos.

The six have since 1980 represented a secret service in a country that is in a constant fight with terror and with itself. You might have thought that many horrible events should not be talked about, but they are talked about in this film, that from that point of view is a journalistic scoop. Far away from the quick news clips we are used to from television, the six get their time to talk and to make this viewer shocked and confused. And the questions put to them are all the time direct and right to the point.

Take the oldest of them, Avraham Shalom (who was Shin Bet head 1980-86), a nice grandpa with red braces. Does not look like a man, whose job it was to run a secret service (even if there is a slight resemblance to Alec Guinness in Tinker, Tailor...). You get empathy for him until you hear about his role in the 1984 Bus 300 incident,

where he ordered the execution of two terrorists

(his terminology), who had kidnapped a bus. They were caught alive, injured, Shalom, in the film, told the soldiers to "finish them off". A later Head of the Service characterises him as a "bully, "a tough guy". He lost his job after Bus 300. He talks very nice and appears as a cultivated man, who has lost hope in any peace process, and then suddenly his words reveal his look at "the other", "the enemy". And then he suddenly indirectly states that what Israel has done to the Palestinians today is a bit like what the Nazis did to the Jews!

Shalom and several of the others keep coming back to the theme of lack of security policy. They have no good things to say about the politicians, who want to be presented with two options, when decisions are to be made, no nuances, "not with strategies only tactics" and "forget about morality". These words from high rank officials with a long career in the IDF and in the secret service are more than shocking, presented in this intelligent, analytical frame that also, of course, is the History of Israel with the "Palestinian Issue" being constantly present.

Information on how the Shin Bet functions? Indeed – the recruitment policy for hiring collaborators in the occupied West Bank and in Gaza is brought forward. The professional Intelligence work. And how to target terrorists and try to kill only those targeted and not innocent



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[sergei kachkin](#): Yes, that's true, it's really important for the Russians film directors, especially younger ones. As we do hope to build up the tight professional re...

[Elena Demidova](#): Thanks, Tue! It is important for us, Russian filmmakers!...

[Tue Steen Müller](#): For the

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civilians. Which often has failed. As it failed for Carmi Gillon (1994-1996) to establish enough security for Rabin, who was killed by an Israeli extremist in 1995. "I suddenly saw a different Israel", the killer changed history and consequently the work of Shin Bet that included the settlements as areas of operation.

I could go on with examples of what is being said, let me finish with Yuval Diskin (2005-2011), who in the first four minutes catches the viewer's attention, and the core of the visual side of the the film, by talking about the perfect "sterile" operation, illustrated by air photography, from the pov of where the killing bomb will come from, targeting a moving car, that explodes and completes the mission: Killing. "It feels a bit unnatural", he says, "when you know that they were human beings". Later he is the one opposing the government policy, stating that after all this he has almost become a leftist. "We've become Cruel".

Israel, 96 mins.

PS.

Below the link to the website of the film, which gives additional biographical information on the sic head of Shin Bet.

And please do also read the full article by Gideon Levy in Israeli newspaper Haaretz, here is a quote from the conclusion, he makes:

Rolling their eyes, they pass responsibility on to the political leadership, whose role they scomed, as if they could not have influenced much more, or tortured and assassinated much less. As if they did not know at the time that alongside the successful counter-terror operations, the question of how much terror their cruel methods ignited cried out for an answer. How many new terrorists were born in the interrogation cells in which tens of thousands of people were shaken, beaten, bound, humiliated and tortured with the monstrous methods whose use they have admitted.

There are countries in which individuals who are responsible for similar deeds have been prosecuted; in others they at least expressed remorse years later. Not so for our Shin Bet heads. Here they are welcome guests in every news studio or party, celebrities whose opinions are valued, stars who decorate party slates, national heroes no one would think to repudiate...

<http://www.thegatekeepersfilm.com/>

<http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/the-gatekeepers.premium-1.490739>

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[Tue Steen Müller](#): For the Danes: Josephine Michau fortæller at filmen er på fremragende DOXBio's program i 2013. Sådan!...

[Tue Steen Müller](#): Dear Nino Kirtadze. I watched your film at the premiere in Tbilisi almost three years ago at the festival opening, English subtitles, and what my imme...

[kirtadze](#): "Pure propaganda for the politics of the president Saakhasvili, who according to this film has no opposition in his country... Propaganda, yes, and it..."

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