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JC (THE JEWISH CHRONICLE)

Circulation ('000): 33

Readership ('000): 180

Display Rate (£/sqcm): £4.53

- 7 NOV 2008

Iran: an under cover view

4375

IN *THE SECRET War With Iran*, (Oneworld, £16.99) Israeli journalist **Ronen Bergman** has managed to pull off that much-vaunted trick, beloved of blurb-writers, of making a serious, investigative book read like a thriller.

This provides a fascinating insight into the clandestine battle which has raged between Iran, the US, Israel and other actors in the 30 years since the Islamic Revolution, with spies, secret deals, assassinations, terror plots and political intrigue.

The continuous, covert combat between Israel and Iran does have its occasional aberrations, such as when Israel sold arms to Iran in the early 1980s for use in its war with Iraq. As well as background on such past operations, there is also an astonishing amount of detail on recent events like last year's strike on a Syrian nuclear reactor.

Bergman argues that the threat from Iran and its terrorist proxies is the gravest danger facing the world, and has only been belatedly recognised as such by the West, Israel included.

He is regarded as something of a *wunderkind* in Israel (he began his writing career aged 12), where he is seen as both a genius and a sensationalist gossip, recycling rumours and Mossad tittle-tattle. Many in the intelligence agency loathe him; others leak to him.

In his introduction, he reveals that the book is based on "thousands of documents gathered from various sources, and some 300 interviews with pertinent people in 20 countries" – and it shows.

But as he also notes, "it is not always possible to be certain of every detail; intelligence sources have their own agendas". So as thrilling a page-turner as it is, it should not be taken entirely on trust. Things may not be quite that terrifying – or they might be worse.

DANIELLA PELED

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