

Israel, the lobby and its critics

If I Am Not For Myself: Journey of an Anti-Zionist Jew

Mike Marqusee

London and Brooklyn: Verso, £9.99 (UK)

*'This Time We Went Too Far': Truth and Consequences of the
Gaza Invasion*

Norman G. Finkelstein
New York: O R Books, £12

War Crimes in Gaza and the Zionist Fifth Column in America

James Petras
Atlanta: Clear Day Books, \$15

Europe's Alliance With Israel: Aiding the occupation

David Cronin
London: Pluto, £17.99

Tom Easton

One of the more heartening developments in this chilly political climate is the growth of Jewish groups and individuals speaking out and organising against the policies of Israel. Some are prominent figures like Miriam Margolyes, who recently used her fame as Professor Sprout in the Harry Potter series to publicise the living conditions of Palestinians in Gaza. Her self-description as 'a proud Jew and an ashamed Jew' is one that disarmingly cuts through the bile and bluster of those who routinely reach for the 'anti-Semite' smear.

Two of these authors have suffered that fate. Mike Marqusee recounts a moment in his teens when his father abused him as a 'self-hating Jew'. The occasion was when the young Marqusee first measured the behaviour of Israeli forces against the humane, Judaism-derived principles of his liberal family in New York.

Norman Finkelstein has long been targeted by the US lobby for Israel, most famously losing his battle for a tenured teaching post after a campaign of vilification led by Alan Dershowitz, the Harvard professor of law. Dershowitz doesn't

just go for people like Finkelstein, the son of Holocaust survivors. As several of these authors point out, he also led the charge against the United Nations report on the Gaza conflict led by the South African jurist Richard Goldstone. (James Petras's book contains some striking images from Operation Cast Lead.)

All four books point up the increasing difficulties faced by those who support the current policies of Israel, but also warn that increasingly forceful efforts are being made by that country and its allies in an effort to surmount them.

David Cronin provides the best published survey I have yet seen on the Israel lobby in Europe. He shows that Brussels has become the focus of much of that activity, where, he suggests, Israel now has a status not far short of full European Union membership. He lists the failures of the EU to act on Middle East matters where it has direct interests and responsibilities, and indicates the proliferation of organisations set up to promote Israeli interests under other guises. Both in Brussels and London are politicians in hock in one way or another to supporters of Israel – and he names some of the names.

All four books are well footnoted and three – Petras's being the exception – have an index. For those looking to the European dimension, the Marqusee, beautifully written and, in places, deeply moving, is much recommended for its human depth as well as its detailed knowledge. The Cronin book is a big step forward in our understanding of the mechanics of the Israeli lobby in Brussels and London. There's much more to be revealed, but it's a good push in the right direction.

The last word should go to Finkelstein, who has paid a heavy price for his commitment and who says the latest bloodletting in Gaza has now roused the world's conscience:

'Israel can no longer count on reflexive support for its policies. Public opinion polls not only outside but inside

Jewish communities around the world over the past decade reveal a growing unease with Israeli conduct. This shift largely stems from the fact that the public is now much better informed.'

'Historians have dispelled many of the myths Israel propagated to justify its dispossession and displacement of Palestine's indigenous population; human rights organisations have exposed Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians living under occupation; and a consensus has crystallised in the legal-diplomatic arena around a settlement of the conflict that upholds the basic rights of Palestinians.'