

making to be a cause for celebration. It is the contrary link, between Jews and socialism/communism, that he is intent on invalidating: the “connection was more fleeting and fortuitous than might appear; it grew weaker over the years and, in America, broke down in the era of the New Deal” (107). Muller twice records what the Chief Rabbi of Moscow is said to have told Trotsky: “The Trotskyes make the revolutions, and the Bronsteins pay for it” [sic] (140). He minimizes the Jewish involvement in socialism/communism in every way he can think of. For example, he goes to some length to

show that post-war Jewish leadership in Soviet satellites was not a “Jewish” desire but a result of calculated Soviet strategy. Like so many other conservative analysts, Muller allows Marxian communism to run seamlessly into Stalinism, while carefully respecting equivalent distinctions in capitalist economic thought.

One’s eyebrows rise when Muller suggests that Marxian economic theory, in which the enemy is a capitalism that is metaphorically synonymous with Jewishness, is Marx’s revenge for having been born Jewish.

Somehow the left-wing anti-Semitism of the twentieth cen-

tury still stings (“a dialectic of disaster”), while the centuries of ongoing European anti-Semitism are allowed to stand as a fact of nature. Like a true Cold Warrior, Muller sees the evil flowing in only one direction: he is attuned to the crimes of Communism but not to the arguably greater crimes of capitalism (see Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*). After all the explanation is done, it is clear that Muller lives in a coldly rational world in which human fellowship and progressive idealism are tricks of the light.

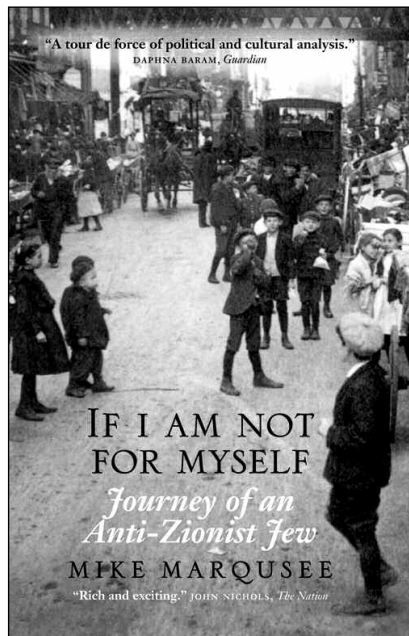
Still, it is an interesting and informative book. ♦

## IF I AM NOT FOR MYSELF: JOURNEY OF AN ANTI-ZIONIST JEW

Mike Marqusee. Verso 2010. 320 pages.

Reviewed by Joanne Naiman

Any Jew who has publicly criticized actions of the Israeli government knows that the inevitable response will be the charge from Zionists that they are “self-hating.” This odd *ad hominem* response is, of course, an attempt to shut down debate on the actual issues, and is also a classic form of ostracism used by all groups to marginalize or expel dissidents. Mike Marqusee’s book is an attempt to respond to this scurrilous charge. Drawing on Rabbi Hillel’s aphorism, he argues that



if he does not speak for himself, the Zionists will claim to be speaking for him. Further, he states that “[s]ince each Israeli atrocity is justified by the exigencies of Jewish survival,

each calls forth a particular witness from anti-Zionist Jews, whose very existence contradicts the Zionist claim to speak for all Jews everywhere.”

*If I Am Not for Myself* is really three books in one. First, and centrally, it is a detailed recounting of the life of the author’s maternal grandfather, Edward V. Morand (known as, and referred to throughout the book as EVM), a progressive writer who was active in New York City politics in the 1930s and 1940s. In 2001, Marqusee inherited EVM’s papers, and drawing on these he is able to create a complex narrative of both EVM’s life and his opinions. The second part of the book is the author’s own story, detailing how—among other things—he shifted from the nice Jewish kid who attended eight years of Reform Jewish Sunday school to the outspoken activist anti-Zionist in his adulthood. The transition be-

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gins in a Sunday school class just after the 1967 Six Day War, where a visiting soldier tells them that “the Arabs are better off under Israeli rule. You have to understand these are ignorant people. They go to the toilet in the street.” Because he grew up in a progressive home, Marqusee instantly recognizes this statement for the racism it is, and tells the speaker what he thinks. For doing so, he is denounced by his teacher. Even more troubling to him, however, is when his normally supportive father subsequently goes after him as well, and accuses him of expressing Jewish self-hatred.

The third, and certainly the most complex, part of the book involves the author’s frequent analytical interventions. These cover a wide array of topics, including—but not limited to—a discussion of the uses and abuses of analogies, an examination of writings of some Biblical prophets, a short history of the emancipation of the Jews of modern

Europe, the parallels between Zionism and right-wing Hindu nationalism, the recent history of Jews in the Arab Diaspora, and the divisions in the American Jewish left that culminated with the rise of McCarthyism and the creation of the State of Israel. Marqusee is clearly a deep yet broad thinker in the classical intellectual mould, and there is food for thought in every chapter.

The details of New York City politics can at times be a bit tedious, especially to the Canadian reader, but just when one’s eyes start glazing over, Marqusee shifts gears and offers us some fascinating historical or analytical tidbit. For example, given the debate today about the utility of boycotts, divestments, and sanctions against Israel in support of the Palestinian cause, it is interesting to learn that in 1933 the idea spread across U.S. Jewish society that there should be a boycott of Nazi Germany. The boycott—supported by EVM and a number of Jewish groups in New York who saw what was happening in Germany and felt the urgent need to respond—was opposed by most mainstream American Jewish organizations. The most ardent opponent of the boycott, however, was the World Zionist Organization, which was then negotiating with the Nazis for the transfer of funds of some wealthy German Jews (as well as some Jews themselves, who could recoup a portion of these funds after emigrating) to Palestine. This “*Ha’avara*” (“transfer”) deal was unveiled by the Nazis in August 1933, exactly one day before the World Jewish Congress meeting in Prague was to debate a

boycott resolution. The boycott proposal was rejected by a vote of 240 to 48. According to Marqusee, the *Ha’avara* grew rapidly into a banking and trading enterprise in Jerusalem between the Nazis and the Zionist Federation of Germany and the Anglo-Palestine Bank, and accounted for some 60 percent of all capital invested in Palestine between August 1933 and September 1939. For the Germans, notes Marqusee, the principal advantage of the *Ha’avara* was the undermining of the boycott movement.

The culmination of EVM’s story occurs in 1948, the year of Israeli “independence”—or the *Nakba* (catastrophe) as it’s referred to by Palestinians—when he becomes an ardent supporter of Zionism. After a lifetime of being an internationalist and advocate for universal rights and freedoms, he now moves to narrow nationalism and a worldview of Jewish exceptionalism. As Marqusee writes: “In the midst of [Israel’s] one-way process of destruction, displacement and plunder, EVM’s constant cry is ‘no retreat.’ He seems to have entirely lost his former distaste for war and militarism...In this war, there seems to be only one kind of victim, Jewish.”

Marqusee clearly sees EVM as a microcosm of what happened to the progressive Jewish left as a whole at that time. For both there was “[a] failure to imagine the people on the receiving end of your dreams. It’s a failure rooted in Western and white supremacy, a network of unexamined assumptions that has proven much more ineradicable and insidious than anti-Semitism. EVM’s writings of 1948 resound with

In education  
and labour  
public relations,  
the words  
do matter

**FF** Face to Face  
Communication  
Consultants

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it, and offer inadvertent testimony to the racist character of the Nakba and Nakba denial.”

The last chapter of the book, “Confessions of an Anti-Zionist Jew,” is far more complex and theoretical than its title, and definitely invites more than one reading. Although the author does start at the personal level—completing EVM’s story and moving on with his own—the last part of the chapter is really Marqusee’s attempt to frame a political economy of Zionism. The issues are large and controversial, and might have been better served with a more developed chapter of their own.

One central issue, put simply, is where Zionism fits into the broader imperialist project. Here the author responds to the popular concept on the left of what is either termed a “Jewish lobby” or a “Zionist lobby” in North America and Britain, a lobby that unduly influences governments in support of Israel. Not only does Marqusee feel that this argument is an inaccurate assessment of power, but also that it “strengthens and legitimizes the entity it seeks to expose and weaken.”

Further, he questions the argument, increasingly prevalent even in some left circles, that continued U.S. support for Israel should be ended, not because of its intrinsic illegitimacy, but rather because it is bad for America’s “national interests.” But what are these “national interests,” Marqusee wonders, and why is the left taking this reactionary position? The alternative to Zionism, in his analysis, should not be Americanism, but rather the traditional progres-

sive position of “an internationalist humanism.” In other words, progressives should be focussing on such things as Israel’s violation of international law, its denial of basic human rights to the Palestinian people, and its escalating threats against Iran, which—given Israel’s nuclear capacity—could ignite a global nuclear holocaust.

Marqusee specifically addresses the writings of James Petras, a long-time analyst of U.S. power in Latin America, who describes the U.S. government as having been hijacked by the “Ziocons,” and the country as effectively controlled by “agents of a foreign power.” To Marqusee, these accusations are little different from the anti-Semitic slurs heard decades earlier by EVM. Marqusee notes that “[a]t their best, such ideas are tactical gifts to the enemies of the Palestinian people. They make it harder to break Jews from Israel and easier to delegitimize the movement as a whole.... Like the Zionists, the self-styled exposers of ‘Jewish power’ insist that the racial category of Jewishness is real and politically determinant.”

Of particular interest to Canadians is Marqusee’s critique of the British All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Anti-Semitism, which took place in 2006. This Inquiry was the predecessor of the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism, and is linked to the conference of the Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism held in Ottawa in November 2010. Amongst his many criticisms of the Inquiry, Marqusee points out that its search for anti-Semitism (like that of its

Canadian counterpart) was very selective, focusing almost totally on progressive movements that are in solidarity with the Palestinians rather than the odious true anti-Semitism found on the right of the political spectrum.

The author reminds us that the Zionists have not merely appropriated our voice, they have also stolen the proud history of progressive Jews. He argues that anti-Zionism is an attempt to reclaim that history, and thus, “is not in the end merely a negative category. Within it is a necessary affirmation: an affirmation of internationalism, of humanity...” If progressive Jews want to reconnect with this past, they have to regain the voice of internationalism, solidarity, and humanism, and publicly acknowledge their support for the Palestinian cause. Marqusee ends the book where he began, arguing that “[t]he people who call us self-haters want to steal our selves from us—appropriate *our* selves for *their* cause—and speaking as a self, I’m damned if I’m going to let them get away with it.”

There have been a number of fine books appearing in the past few years that have challenged Zionist history and ideology, but none that I have seen are as readable or accessible as this work. Marqusee’s integration of biography, history, philosophy, and theoretical analysis makes this a unique piece of writing. Most important, he offers anti-Zionist Jews an alternative to their perpetual state of being on the defensive. To be opposed to Zionism is to be a Jew who remembers the past and stands with pride on the side of humanitarianism, universalism, and internationalism. ♦