

## ALICE ROTHCHILD'S "BROKEN PROMISES"

Encounters with Israeli and Palestinian peace activists are at the core of *Broken Promises, Broken Dreams, Stories of Jewish & Palestinian Trauma & Resistance*, by **Alice Rothchild** (Pluto Press, 268 pages). A physician who has written for our magazine and is active in Boston's Workmen's Circle, Rothchild seeks to humanize the "players in this controversy while bringing the larger issues to a more accessible scale." Her book includes portraits of Dr. Ruchama Marton, founder of Physicians for Human Rights-Israel ("Within the power game managed by the state to silence the voices of the 'other,'" Marton says, "the psychiatrist becomes complicit so long as he or she does not actively resist the prevailing mood"); Gila Svirsky, co-founder of the Coalition of Women for Peace (Svirsky: "I came to understand that politics was driving the conflict, not some inchoate inexplicable violence"); Dr. Allam Jarrar of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society in Nablus (Jarrar: "Never look into the eyes of the soldiers. This is the 'procedure' . . . to be submissive, to be inferior"); "ST," a Palestinian medical student at Al Quds University in East Jerusalem and an activist in Seeds of Peace (ST: "There are skills that you need in order to interact with someone who for a long time was presented to you as an enemy and who practices this role very well") — and numerous other Jewish and Arab doctors, social workers, and activists who risk a great deal on a daily basis in order to live by the rules of their conscience.

"As a young Jewish teenager," Rothchild writes, "I completely succumbed" to Israel's magnetism. "I joined various Jewish youth movements and linked hands and scarves in a number of Israeli dance clubs." A long process of political awakening and disillusionment, however, led her to understand that "buried in the wounds of my own people's near-annihilation and the subsequent victories of war, another people's story was lost." She now believes that "ending the occupation has the potential to empower peace-seeking factions in Israel and Palestinian communities to find a political solution." Among the obstacles to that outcome, however, she sees "marketing and image making" about Israel that ignores the harrowing contradictions of the occupation. Her final chapter is a quick review and commentary on such recent events as the Mearsheimer-Walt "Israel Lobby" controversy and the suppression of "Voices of Palestine," an art exhibit at Brandeis University.

Rothchild has worked with medical delegations to Israel and the Occupied Territories and has been face-to-face with danger, turmoil and suffering. Her book includes the voices of people on the street (cab drivers, soldiers, teachers, mothers) in both communities, whom she meets with tolerance and empathy. Her listening skills are first-rate and her courage is outstanding. "I listen to the news differently now," she writes; "under every headline I see real people, mothers, fathers, and children caught in this drama." Thanks to her sharp observational skills, her readers get to share in this humanization.

— L.B.

