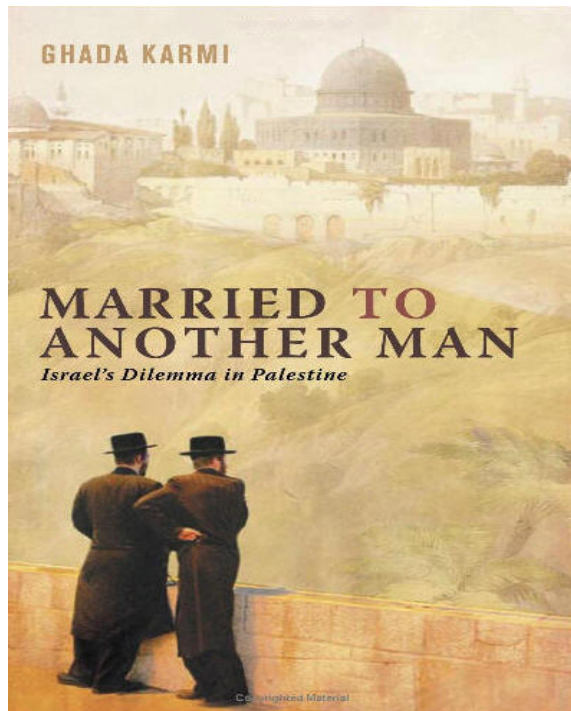


Ghada Karmi, *Married To Another Man. Israel's Dilemma in Palestine*, Pluto Press, London-Ann Arbor, MI/USA 2007, 315 p., € 14.99.



Two rabbis, visiting Palestine in 1897, observed that the land was like a bride, "beautiful, but married to another man". By which they meant that, if a place was to be found for a Jewish "homeland" in Palestine, the indigenous inhabitants had to leave. Where should the people of Palestine go? Squaring that circle has been the essence of Israel's dilemma ever since its establishment and the cause of the Palestinian tragedy that it led to. It has remained insoluble. Ghada Karmi shows that the major reason for this failure was the original and unresolved Zionist quandary of how to create and maintain a Jewish state in a land inhabited by another people. Zionism was never able to resolve the problem of "the other man".

There are only two ways: Either the "other man" had to be eradicated, or the Jewish state project had to be given up. Israel did not do either. It succeeded in 1948 in expelling and keeping out a large number of

Palestinians, but Israel was never able to "cleanse" the land of Palestine entirely. The fundamental mistake of the Zionists was their belief that "the entire land of Palestine was Jewish and the Arab presence in it a resented foreign intrusion". All in all, the Zionists were "relatively" successful, but for the indigenous owners of the land it was a catastrophe which has been going on until today. "If Israel remains a colonialist state in its character, it will not survive. In the end the region will be stronger than Israel, in the end the indigenous people will be stronger than Israel," as Akiva Eldar quoted the former Mazpen member Haim Hangebi in the Israeli Daily Haaretz on August 8, 2003. The author concludes: "Zionism's ethos was not about peaceful co-existence but about colonialism and an exclusivist ideology to be imposed and maintained by force."

Ghada Karmi is a renowned commentator on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a well-known figure on British radio and TV. She was born in Jerusalem, and forced to leave as a child in 1948. She grew up in Britain where she became a physician, academic and writer. Currently, Karmi is a research fellow and lecturer at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter. She has written several books, including *In Search of Fatima*, which was widely praised.

The Zionist dilemma was perfectly and bluntly expressed by the so-called "post-Zionist" representative and professor, Benny Morris, which led not only to an uproar in the scientific community, but also to a deep disappointment, because Morris was considered to belong to the "new historians". In this interview with the daily Haaretz and in his article in *The Guardian* he presented himself as an ardent Zionist. "He encapsulates all Zionism's major elements, its inherent implausibility as a practical project, its arrogance, racism and self-righteousness, and the insurmountable obstacle to it of Palestine's original population, which refuses to go away." For his colonialist and racist view he was severely criticized by Baruch Kimmerling and many others who could not understand his attitude.

Morris said incredible things: "A Jewish state would not have come into being without the uprooting of 700,000 Palestinians. Therefore it was necessary to uproot them. There was no choice but to expel that population." According to him the Zionists made a mistake to have allowed any Palestinians to remain.

"If the end of the story turns out to be a gloomy one for the Jews, it will be because Ben-Gurion did not complete the transfer of 1948. (...) In other circumstances, apocalyptic ones, which are liable to be realized in five or ten years, I can see expulsions. If we find ourselves (...) in a situation of warfare (...) acts of expulsion will be entirely reasonable. They may even be essential (...) If the threat to Israel is existential, expulsion will be justified." Morris concludes, Zionism is faced with two options: perpetual cruelty and repression of others, or the end of the enterprise. These alternatives give the whole enterprise an apocalyptic touch. For the time being, the Israeli security establishment has chosen the "iron wall"-concept which refers to a wall of bayonets.

Ghada Karmi shows in one of her chapters, "The Cost of Israel to the Arabs", that the price they had to pay was horrendous. She holds not only Israel but also the West, especially the United States of America, is responsible for the rejectionist attitude of the Israeli political class. They just did never consider any compromise. In this chapter the author describes the damage that Israel's creation inflicted on the Arabs, how it has retarded their development and provoked a reactive and dangerous radicalization. The Arabs are always asked to be realistic and recognise the facts on the ground. "The Arabs were expected to make peace with Israel - and to love it as well." Under the surface Israel has made much progress towards normalisation with the Arab world. The Arab leaders have to conceal that truth from their own populations. Karmi views Western policy in Israel's case rather strategic than ideological. The installation of the Jewish state as the local agent of Western regional self-interest was an effective way of dividing the Arabs, so as to ensure that they remained dependent and subjugated." Egypt and Jordan are the best examples.

In the Chapter "Why do Jews support Israel?" the author asks "Why did a project, which was, on the face of it, implausible in the first place and inevitably destructive of others, succeed so well? Just as importantly, why did it continue to receive support, despite a clear record of aggression and multiple breaches of international law against its neighbours that ensured its survival - not just as a state but as a disruptive force?" A number of disparate factors account for the unconditional support for Israel: the Holocaust and its associated trauma and guilts, the exigencies of Western regional policy, religious mythology, so-called common values, and Israel as the "only democracy in the Middle East" et cetera. It is difficult to find a similar phenomenon for a state in the 21st Century that gets away with vast human rights violations, colonial subjugation of another people and a disdain of international law. Not only for the American Jewish community but also for many liberal Jews "Israel had taken on a mythic quality, part-identity, part-religion, and its dissolution, as a Jewish state, became psychologically and emotionally unthinkable. The obverse of this coin was of course a paranoid suspicion and hatred of anyone who threatened Israel in the slightest way." Karmi describes the Zionist desperate attempt to prove an unbroken chain between the Jews of Palestine and those of Europe. "Put like this, the absurdity of the idea is obvious, but that in fact was the proposition Zionists wanted people to believe in order to justify the Jewish 'return' to the 'homeland'." Because the Zionist claim rested on such shaky grounds, Jewish researchers "tried to use genetics as a way of demonstrating a link between European (Ashkenazi) Jews and their supposed Middle Eastern origins by way of finding a common ancestry with Middle Eastern Jews".

The author discusses the relationship between the US and Israel and the dominant influence of the "Israel lobby", especially AIPAC which adopted an right-wing posture, both in its support for the Likud party in Israel and the political right in the US, including the Christian Zionists whose belief system goes like follows: They adhere literally to the Old Testament. Fundamental was the return of the Jews to the land of Israel, which was given them by God through the covenant with Abraham. According to this legacy all the land between the Nile and the Euphrates was granted to the Jews. The Jewish return to Palestine (Israel) was essential as a prelude to Christ's Second Coming; in that sense, Jews were the instrument by which divine prophecy would be fulfilled. However, they were obliged to convert to Christianity and rebuild the Jewish Temple. Seven years of tribulation would follow, culminating in a

holocaust or Armageddon, during which the converted Jews and other godless people would be destroyed. Only then would the Messiah return to redeem mankind and establish the Kingdom of God on earth where he would reign for a thousand years. The converted Jews, restored as God's Chosen People, would enjoy a privileged status in the world. At the end of all this, they and all the righteous would ascend to heaven in the final `Rapture`. The Jewish role in all this meant: "Jews restored to Israel and converted, leading to the Second Advent, leading to mankind's redemption."

In chapter four, five and six the author criticizes the so-called peace process, Arafat's destructive final role and Israel's attempt to revive the Jordanian option. In signing the Oslo agreement, "Arafat legitimized Zionism, the very ideology that had created and still perpetuates the Palestinian tragedy". The Israeli aim to destroy the Palestinians could not have been better described as in the words of the Israeli sociologist professor Baruch Kimmerling who wrote in his book *Politicide* that the process of gradual military, political and psychological attrition whose aim was to destroy the Palestinians as an independent people with a coherent political and social existence would make them vanish by their fragmentation and irrelevance. "Forty years of Israeli politicide had done its work on the Palestine question as a national cause. The Palestinians, already in an unenviable position of physical fragmentation after 1948, became politically fragmented with the Israeli occupation." In her chapter "Solving the problem Karmi argues that a two-state solution is out of reach. Consequently, she calls in chapter seven for a one-state solution. "In a single state, no Jewish settler would have to move and no Palestinian would be under occupation." The author thinks that creating a Jewish state was "crazy" at Herzl's time and even now therefore "creating a unitary state of Israel/Palestine, far less implausible than the Zionist project ever was, should be no less successful".

Referring to Hangebi's statement that Israel as a "colonial state" cannot survive, Karmi proposes an unthinkable idea: "The best solution to this intractable problem is to turn back the clock before there was any Jewish state and return history as from there." But at the end, she turns back to realism: "The clock will not go back and, although the Jewish state cannot be uncreated, it might be, so to speak, unmade. The reunification of Palestine's shattered remains in a unitary state for all its inhabitants, old and new, is the only realistic, humane and durable route out of the morass. It is also the only way for the Israeli Jewish community (as opposed to the Israeli state) to survive in the Middle East."

The author unfolds the destructive impact of Zionism on the Palestinian people and the Arab world. Pluto Press and its publisher Roger van Zwanenberg can be congratulated for their courage to publish this excellent book, especially in the light of the attack against Joel Kovel's book *Overcoming Zionism* by Jewish pressure groups. For the sake of freedom of speech one can hope that the University of Michigan Press will not succumb to these baseless accusations. Anybody who is interested in a plain description of the conflict should read Karmi's book. It is a must read.

Ludwig Watzal