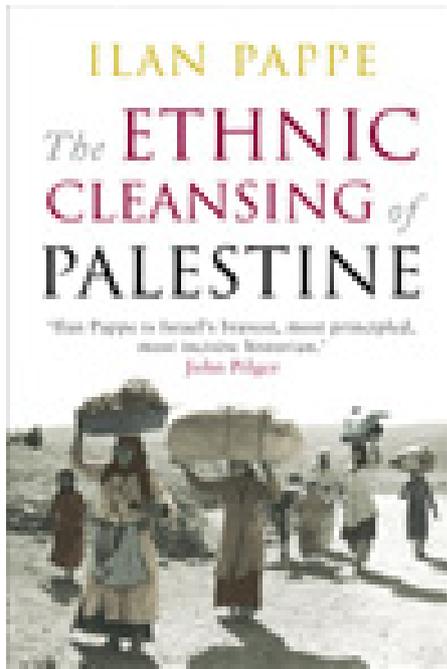


Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld, Oxford 2006, 313 Seiten.

Auch auf Deutsch erschienen: *Die ethnische Säuberung Palästinas*, Zweitausendeins, Frankfurt 2007, 413 Seiten.



The 1948 Palestine-Israel war is known to Israelis as „The war of Independence“, but for Palestinians it will forever be the Nakba, the „catastrophe“. Alongside the creation of the State of Israel, the end of the war led to one of the largest forced migrations in modern history which is titled by Ilan Pappé: “The ethnic Cleansing of Palestine”. Around a million people were expelled from their homes at gunpoint, civilians were massacred, and hundreds of Palestinian villages deliberately destroyed. Though the truth about the “mass expulsion” has been systematically distorted and suppressed, had it been taken place in the twenty-first century it could only have been called “ethnic cleansing”, so on the cover of the English version of Ilan Pappé’s groundbreaking book.

Ilan Pappé, former Professor at the University of Haifa and now at the University of Exeter, argues passionately for the international recognition of this tragedy. His epoch-making and controversial work sheds new light on the origins and development of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, asking questions that the world has so far failed to ask to reveal the real story behind the events of 1948. Based on meticulous research, including recently declassified Israeli archival material, Pappé demonstrates convincingly that “transfer” was from the start an integral part of a carefully planned strategy, and lies at the root of today’s ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

For several years, the author was defamed for his realistic views on Israel’s wrongdoings against the original inhabitants of the land of Palestine. After years of mobbing he could not bear it any longer and went into exile to Great-Britain in order to teach freely. The Israelis have arranged themselves with the Zionist mythology. Anybody who questions its narrative gets into deep trouble. Former US-President Jimmy Carter wrote a book with the title “Palestine. Peace Not Apartheid”. Immediately he was stigmatized as „Antisemite“ by what John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt calls “The Israel Lobby”.

Anybody who is interested in the historic truth should read the twelve chapters of Pappé’s book. He wants “to explore both the mechanism of the 1948 ethnic cleansing, and the cognitive system that allowed the world to forget, and enabled the perpetrators to deny, the crime the Zionist movement committed against the Palestinian people in 1948. In other words, I want to make the case for the paradigm of ethnic cleansing and use it to replace the paradigm of war as the basis of the scholarly research of, and the public debate about, 1948.” The author uses the phrase in order “to prevent the crimes Israel committed from being attributed to such elusive factors as ‘the circumstances’, ‘the army’ or, as Morris has it, ‘à la guerre comme à la guerre’, and similar vague references that let sovereign states off the hook and enable individuals to escape justice. I accuse, but I am also part of the society that stands condemned in this book. I feel both responsible for and part of the story and, like others in my own society, I am convinced, as my final pages show, that such a painful journey into the past of is the only way forward if we want to create a better future for us all, Palestinians and Israelis alike. Because, at heart, that is what the book is about.”

Ilan Pappé has written an alternative draft to Benny Morris' work, although he was the first who wrote in 1987 about "The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem". He was named a "New Historian" or a "Post-Zionist". These labels covered up his real convictions. They came to the open in a „chilling interview“ with the Israeli daily Haaretz in 2004 in which he came out as an advocate of expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948. To the question whether David Ben-Gurion expelled not enough Palestinians, Morris answered: „If he had already engaged in expulsion, maybe he should have done a complete job. I know that this stuns the Arabs and the liberals and the politically correct types. But my feeling is that this place would be quieter and know less suffering if the matter had been resolved once and for all. If Ben-Gurion had carried out a large expulsion and cleaned the whole country — the whole land of Israel, as far as the Jordan River. It may yet turn out that this was his fatal mistake. If he carried out a full expulsion — rather than a partial one — he would have stabilized the State of Israel for generations.“ The interviewer wanted to know whether he was for expulsions right now: "I say not at this moment. ... But I am ready to tell you that in other circumstances, apocalyptic ones, which are liable to be realized in five or ten years I can see expulsions." And what about the Israeli Palestinians: "The Israeli Arabs are a time bomb. Their slide into complete Palestinization has made them an emissary of the enemy that is among us. They are a potential fifth column. In both demographic and security terms they are liable to undermine the state." Regarding the Palestinian he asserted, "Something like a cage has to be built for them... There is no choice. There is a wild animal there that has to be locked up in one way or another." According to Morris, Palestinians are "barbarians who want to take our lives... At the moment that society is in the state of being a serial killer. It is a very sick society. It should be treated the way we treat individuals who are serial killers." In her excellent book "Married to Another Men" the British writer of Palestinian origin, Ghada Karmi, gave a good characterization of Benny Morris: "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."

Contrary to Morris Ilan Pappé is of a different stamp. He does not curry favour with the Israeli consensus. He rather bears the consequences. For Pappé, the circumstances of 1948 are the Gordian knot which has to be cut. But the majority of the Israelis have been denying this. They are convinced that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict started in 1967 and not in 1948. In order to solve it, it takes just a few agreements. Furthermore, all historical events concerning 1948 are non-negotiable, especially, the refugee question and the their right of return of the Palestinians.

In his epilogue Pappé names the main hinderance for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, the Zionist ideology which has to be correctly identified. "The problem with Israel was never its Jewishness – Judaism has many faces and many of them provide a solid basis for peace and cohabitation; it is its ethnic Zionist character. Zionism does not have the same margins of pluralism that Judaism offers, especially not for the Palestinians. They can never be part of the Zionist state and space, and will continue to fight – and hopefully their struggle will be peaceful and successful. If not, it will be desperate and vengeful and, like a whirlwind, will suck all up in a huge perpetual sandstorm that will rage not only through the Arab and Muslim worlds, but also within Britain and the United States, the powers which, each in their turn, feed the tempest that threatens to ruin us all."

Pappé's book is courageous and disenchants the myth of the Israeli elite that in 1948 there were no expulsions of the original inhabitants from their homeland of Palestine. That the author had to go into exile to Great Britain shows a low self-esteem of the Israeli society at its 60th anniversary.

Ludwig Watzal

