



Antony Lerman. *The Making and Unmaking of a Zionist. A Personal and Political Journey*, Pluto Press, London 2012, 228 pp. 18 British Pounds.

How Israeli Zionist policy turns even true believers of Zionism into serious critics of this ideology can be studied by reading Antony Lerman's book. As a teenager he wanted to live on a kibbutz and be part of a generation who intended to build a socialist society in Israel. In 1970, with the age of 24, he went to Israel, became a citizen of the State of Israel, and served in the army. Already in 1972, he returned to the UK in order to study for a university degree. In 1979, he began working as a researcher, writer and editor for an institute dealing with issues affecting Jews worldwide.

Lerman's book tells the story of a young Zionist who started out as a 15-year old boy who lives home for a Zionist youth summer camp to become an Israeli citizen in 1970. But after a long journey he does not consider himself a Zionist anymore. "Having rejected the ethnocentricity of Zionism and the moral and practical implications of taking coercive, racist and illiberal measures to secure a state with a Jewish majority in perpetuity, I can no longer subscribe to a project the logical conclusion of which is to attain such a maximalist nationalist end. No people or state is obliged to follow a path laid down by the exponents of the most extreme interpretation of its national destiny." (198) As a citizen of the UK, too, he calls himself British and English, but not a British and English nationalist.

Over a period of over 30 years, the author became more deeply involved in communal and global Jewish politics, of which his involvement with Israel and Zionism was an integral part. Lerman founded a Jewish think tank and established a multi-million pound grant-making foundation that supported Jewish life in Europe. In 2006, he returned to head the think tank and found himself at the centre of polemical debates over the danger of "anti-Semitism" and the policies of the State of Israel. After a three-year struggle within the Jewish and pro-Israel establishment, Lerman resigned in frustration from the directorship in 2009. During this three-year period, the author's view on Israel and Zionism changed gradually and dramatically.

The author writes as an insider of the workings of organized Jewish communal life, the functioning of national and international Jewish political organizations and the Zionist movement. These different aspects give Lerman's book a unique perspective. It is not an autobiography; he uses autobiographical aspects where it is necessary to add to the picture. He mentions other people only when their thoughts or statements appear central to his own story.

Unsystematically, Lerman read many books by Zionist thinkers. He was impressed by the hard-headed, state-demanding political views of David Ben-Gurion. Three Zionist thinkers stood out against all others forming the ideology of the movement: Ber Borochov, A. D. Gordon and Berl Katznelson. The first fissures in his humanistic notion about Zionism occurred when a commanding officer addressed the soldiers who made a route march from their base to Hebron. He spoke in a steely voice using "extreme, demonizing language" when speaking about the "Arabs", writes the author. Thus, their Uzi sub-machine guns were loaded with live ammunition.

According to Lerman, leaving the kibbutz had more to do with using his brain than developing his brawn. He left Israel with a heavy-heart but out of personal considerations. "The stark fact is that the main reason for deciding to leave the kibbutz and Israel was to save our marriage." (51) Despite having had already ideological scruples against Israel's policy, personal motives predominated. The stigma of a "yordim", someone who "goes down", hurt Lerman deeply. The strong desire of returning a later date was prevalent.

Back in the UK, the author took a job with the Jewish National Fund (JNF). Out of other job opportunities, he took a job with the JNF, which he considered a "soul-destroying compromise". For almost 30 years, Lerman held different jobs at the highest levels of international Jewish political and intellectual life. In the 1990s, he founded the "Institute for Jewish Policy Research", a Jewish think tank. The more he spoke out against the policy of the State of Israel towards the Palestinians, the more he became a target of Zionist extremists. Finally, he left the Institute.

Over the years, Antony Lerman turned from a Zionist idealist into a Jewish intellectual. It took him quite a long time to discover that Zionist ideology has nothing to do with Judaism and Jewish ethic. The book many find many readers and inspire many others to start their conversion process from Zionism to Judaism.

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http://www.international.to/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7098:antony-lerman-the-making-and-unmaking-of-a-zionist-a-personal-and-political-journe&catid=66:oped&Itemid=151

<http://mwcnews.net/focus/analysis/22573-ludwigwatzal-antonylerman.html>

<http://between-the-lines-ludwig-watzal.blogspot.de/2012/11/the-making-and-unmaking-of-zionist.html>