The intifada, the Palestinian mass uprising which began in December 1987, the Declaration of Independence of the Palestinian state-in-exile in 1988, and the announcement by the Reagan administration that it will negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization, have stunningly altered the parallelogram of forces in the Middle East. To be sure, all of Palestine remains in the hands of Zionism. The government of Israel is still stonewalling, refusing to deal with the PLO, in spite of the unanimous desire of all the states in the world that it do so. At this writing it appears that Yitzhak Shamir, who categorically refuses to leave an inch of the occupied territories conquered in 1967, will continue as Prime Minister. Nevertheless the handwriting is on the wall. The imperialist United States would never have agreed to talk to the PLO if there were the slightest chance that Israel could crush the uprising. It has come time to discuss the future of all of the lands usurped by the Zionists, and all the people there, Arab and Jew.

For the moment, the PLO is calling for a two-state solution, an Arab state and a Jewish state, side by side. But this is only because they are still very much under the gun, and do not think they can get back all of their homeland at this time. What will happen to the Palestinians in exile, in Lebanon and elsewhere? They are from what is now Israel. A West Bank-Gaza state will not solve their problem. What about the Galilee, where Arabs are a majority? Will they still be required to stay within a Jewish state? And what about those Orthodox Jews, mainly in the Mea Shearim section of Jerusalem, who have never accepted the legitimacy of the Zionist state?

When the intifada put the creation of a Palestinian state-in-exile on The order of the day, the Orthodox anti-Zionists of the Naturei Karta
petitioned the \[\text{PLO}\] to include a member of our organization in your government who will
head a ministry of Jewish affairs—affairs which we are most qualified
and professed to deal with. This Ministry will serve the Palestinian
Jews living in the Palestinian state.

As few people, Arab, Jewish or otherwise, are aware of the fact that
there are anti-Zionist religious Jews, and still less know anything about
the Neturei Karta or its history, it is necessary to begin at the beginning
with an explanation of the Orthodox position on Zionism and the modern
history of the movement and its predecessors.

The Orthodox understanding for the destruction of the last ancient
Jewish state and the dispersal of the Jews is very clear. For them,
Jewish politics are exclusively theocentric. To be sure, it was the Romans
who destroyed the Temple of their faith. But God was the hidden hand behind
events. He decreed their exile because of their sins. The conquerors were
only his instrument. Then, according to Tractate Kesuvos, folio 111 of the
Babylonian Talmud, he made the Jews swear [a] They were not to try to reconquer
the country; [b] They would not rebel against the Gentiles amongst whom they
lived; [c] They were not to try to hasten the coming of the Messiah.

In this interpretation, the Jews were driven out for their sins and it was
therefore up to God to determine if and when they would return for their
sins. When that day would come, the Messiah would arrive. He would establish
his state, which would not be the work of humans. As all was in the hand
of the Deity, it would be yet more sin if the Jews took matters into their
own hands, and either tried to reconquer the land from which they were driven
by him for his purposes, or prayed over much to force him in the matter,
or rebelled against their fate by trying to overthrow the whole world.

Throughout the centuries pious Jews made their way to Palestine.
was an exceptionally good deed for a Jew to go there to pray. But this was not obligatory for any Jew and most continued to live in the country of their birth. Even when the Turkish empire opened its doors to the refugees from the Catholic persecutors in Spain, most of these Jews settled elsewhere in the empire, never setting foot in Palestine and not being thought the less for it by their fellow Jews.

The Neturei Karta rightly claims its roots in those "Ashkenazi" or western Jews, mostly Yiddish speakers, who came to Palestine, starting roughly, two centuries ago. They came to pray. Some had trades, many lived on charity, money raised abroad by their co-thinkers on their behalf. None had any political ambitions whatsoever. The land belonged to the Turks and so be it. Most kept their foreign citizenship.

They lived primarily in Jerusalem in the Jewish Quarter, in Safed in Hebron. Sometimes they lived in their own quarters, sometimes they even shared their courtyard with their Muslim and Christian neighbors. In a century which saw the rise of anti-Semitism in countless countries, complete peace reigned between them and the "Ishmaelites." On this even the Zionist scholar would agree. By 1840 these pilgrims were the majority of the entire population within the walls of Jerusalem. Overcrowding was increasing and their first settlement outside the gates was in the Mea Shearim, in 1874.

Orthodoxy and the Zionists: The First Colonies. Given their theology and their peaceful ways, it goes without saying that they opposed Zionism from day one of the movement. When Eliazer Ben Yehuda, a Zionist, went to Jerusalem with the intention of modernizing the Hebrew language to make it into a vehicular, these pious used it exclusively in their prayers. Yiddish remained their workaday language. He disguised himself in their distinctive garb, so that he might eavesdrop on their devotions, so as to pick up on some of the meanings of the Yiddish tongue for his dictionary. When they discovered that he was only interested in the language for purely secular purposes, they expelled him from their midst.
This was a paradigm for how world-wide Orthodoxy then dealt with Zionism. The bulk of Jewry was then losing their traditional faith. Some among the educated and rich, were abandoning it for a bowdlerized version of Judaism, without any interest in returning to Israel or to apostasy to Christianity. The new Jewish working class in Eastern Europe was increasingly under the influence of the atheism of the fast growing socialist movement. Zionism took hold primarily among the middle class. They, too, were losing their faith. And, at the same time, they were under the spell of the rising nationalist mentality endemic within their class throughout Europe as religion began to lose its grip on the masses. For the Orthodox, Zionism was an attempt to substitute nationalism for the notion that the Jews should be "like unto the nations" for their conception that the Jews were a holy nation loyal to their land of habitation, but set apart by God to serve him and await the Messiah. Few Orthodox would have anything to do with the World Zionist Organization. The did set up an Orthodox front, the Mizrahi (East). But it had no life of its own, it was secretly subsidized by Theodor Herzl, founder of the WZO, out of his own pockets. It made little headway among the Orthodox masses.

It was to combat all these heresies that the Agudah Israel, the Union of Israel was established in 1912. Its earliest leaders were Germans who believed in combining Talmudic study with secular knowledge. But the bulk of the Agudah's supporters were Eastern Europeans, mainly from Poland and Hungary. These later were much more medieval in their outlook, tending to see modern science as likely to lead to the heresies the new Union was designed to oppose. The first Palestinian followers of the Agudah were largely of the second, more backward variety.

From the outset the new organization was everywhere marked by extreme social conservatism, rooted theologically in the notion of the Godly oath that the Jews were not to rebel against the Gentiles. When the first world war broke out in 1914 the Agudah, dominated by Germans, supported
the Kaiser against the Tsar infamous for his anti-Semitism. After the war, the main center of the movement was in now independent Poland, where over 90 percent of the people were Jews, the highest percentage for any country in the world.

In 1919 AI received 92,293 votes in the Polish Sejm elections, winning two seats. In 1923, it joined a "minorities bloc" led by a Zionist, winning six deputies and two Senators. In 1930, it won one seat, running on the government slate backing the despotic Josef Pilsudski. They supported his regime because, dictatorial as he tried to be, he kept order in the streets, putting down anti-Semites as well as leftists. All progressive elements in Jewish life saw them as hopeless reactionaries, conservative socially and bitterly opposed to every modern idea, good or bad.

In Palestine, their local branch never challenged the British mandatory power's right to run the country. But they did everything possible to keep their community separate from the Zionist apparatus which the British tried to make the official representatives of the Jews of Palestine.

At all times they sought to reassure the Arabs that they had no part in the Zionist scheme to convert the country into a Jewish state.

Their most effective leader in Palestine in that period was Jacob de Haan, a noted lawyer and journalist. Once a socialist in his native Holland, de Haan had married a Gentile. Suddenly, just before World War I, he became Orthodox and a Mizrahi Zionist. Abandoning his wife and children in 1918, he settled in Palestine. There he left the Mizrahi for the Aguda. He arranged a delegation to Amman where they met Sherif Hussein, the then Hajar king of Jordan, who is now the Sharif of Mecca, the grandfather of King Hussein. They explained to Hussein, the grandson of King Hussein of Jordan, they they were total opponents of Zionism, that they were orthodox.

All possibilities of establishing a modus vivendi with the Arabs was lost when, on June 30, 1924, de Haan was assassinated. There is no doubt he was murdered by the Haganah, then the united Zionist militia. The Encyclopaedia Judaica article on him categorically states that "His assailants were two members of the Haganah, acting on instructions issued by their high command."
In 1957, Uri Avneri of Ha'olam Hazeh interviewed one of the murderers then living in California. The assassin implicated Yitzhak Ben Zvi in 1924, a Haganah commander, and in 1957 the President of Israel, as having given the order to kill de Haan. On June 30, 1974, the Zionist paper Ma'ariv confirmed Ben Zvi's complicity in the terrorist action.

There was in fact no possibility then of a genuine alliance against Zionism on the part of the Aguda and the Palestinian community, given its leadership and sociological composition. In 1929 provocateurs from the Revisionist Party, the predecessor to today's Herut Party, organized a nationalist demonstration at the Walling Wall. The Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, whipped up counter demonstrations against Jews as such, rather than against the Zionists. The Muslim masses, then overwhelmingly illiterate, responded by a dreadful massacre of unoffending Orthodox in Hebron and Safed. The Aguda tried, even after the carnage, to maintain friendly relations with the Palestinian community. But the objective, however, was that in practice many of the Orthodox, of necessity, began to look to the Zionists for protection against Palestinian mobs, even though they still understood that it was the very presence of the Zionists, with their scheme to make the country into a Jewish state, that was the source of the sudden eruption of hatred towards them.

The Neturei Karta is Born (Gold)

In the 1930s, a new type of Agudist began to settle in the country. These were Orthodox from Germany and Poland who emigrated to Palestine primarily to get away from anti-Semitism, rather than merely to pray in the holy land. They brought with them a much more economically oriented mentality than that of the old Yishuv (the old settlement). They were not prepared to totally isolate themselves from the rapidly expanding Zionist economy. Additionally, the international Aguda was ideologically collapsing in the face of the anti-Semitic onslaught. Their policy of loyalty, even servility, towards the heads of the Gentile states under which they lived was no longer working even in a minimalist way.
conservative to even think of mobilizing their following, and other Jews for resistance to the wolves, they inevitably began to grasp at straws, seeking for an accommodation (in practice if not in theory) with the Zionists. In 1935 a delegation from their world headquarters reestablished their
Palestinian section, giving effective power to the new immigrants.

At the 1937 meeting of the world council of torah sages, a furious debate broke out between the old guard of the old yishuv and some of the delegates from the Polish section, who now began to think that it was possible to have first a secular Jewish state which would then become religious.

The ideological drift within the world movement and the effective takeover of the party apparatus in Palestine by the accommodationists led to a split in the movement in Palestine. A group led by rabbi Amram Blau established a new organization which in 1938 began to call itself Neturei Karta. The term is from the Aramaic and means guardians of the city. It is from a story in the Talmud which says that the religious scholars, not soldiers, are the true guardians of the city. The name was chosen because the new organization was mobilizing Orthodox opinion against the Zionists' attempt to collect money for the Haganah, which was helping the British to crush the Palestinians who were in revolt at the time.

The break with the Aguda became permanent as the older group continued to adapt to Zionism. In theory, it is still non-Zionist. In practice, it is a fifth wheel in the Zionist cart. It has members of the Israeli knesset and at this writing, it is trying to find a place for itself in the next cabinet. Above all other things, it is forever trying to get more money from the state for its yeshivas, and to impose its conceptions of Orthodoxy on the rest of the Jewish society.

In the immediate post-war period the Neturei Karta pledged with the United Nations not to establish a Zionist state, of course to no avail. Later, when the state was set up, they again urged the UN to at least set up the
international administration for Jerusalem which the UN had voted for in 1947, again with no success.

The Holocaust wiped out the social base of the Neturei Karta in Eastern Europe. Some survivors emigrated to Palestine in the post-war period. But there was no ideological reason why its supporters had to go to Palestine and many of their leading Hungarian rabbis, most notably the Satmar rabbi, settled in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York or in Kiryat Joel, in upstate New York. It is difficult to say just how many followers of the Neturei Karta there really are. It is not a card carrying organization. And, like virtually all religious organizations, its leaders are pious frauds when it comes to saving how strong they are. Moseh Hirsch, secretary of the group in Jerusalem, claims about 60,000 followers in Israel and half a million worldwide. Both figures are unreal. If you count the biggest Orthodox demonstrations backed by Karta supporters, then about 45,000 would be a more or less accurate figure. But demonstrations of a strictly anti-Zionist nature are far smaller. World-wide, their only genuine stronghold is in Williamsburg. The writer was born there and frequently returns there. The ultra-Orthodox number about 50,000. But this is for entire families and by no means all those living there are Neturei Karta. There are other communities in London, Caracas, and Belgium and elsewhere. But none of these are very large, and certainly the entire grouping does not come to 500,000.

Neturei Karta's following living in the Zionist state have been fanatic in separating themselves from the surrounding society. This writer heard from them that, for a time, they would not even let their children be vaccinated against polio by Zionist doctors or clinics. This lasted until some of their children got the disease. For some years they avoided using modern Hebrew, which is a Zionist creation. They have finally given up this policy as it proved impossible for them to reach the younger generation of
Israeli Orthodox except in the language which they spoke. However Yiddish is still the language of the home and street in the Mea Shearim. They still use it to teach in their schools. Their identification with Yiddish gets in the way of their proselytizing, particularly among Sephardic Jews who naturally see no reason to conduct religious education in a tongue which neither they nor their ancestors ever spoke.

Their inability to emancipate themselves from even the clothing styles of Eastern Europe of two centuries ago, with their outlandish fur-trimmed hats, and long black coats, worn even in the summer in both New York and Jerusalem, confirms the Israeli and American public's image of them as outlandish fanatics. For them, the real holy land is the alte heim, the old home in the old country in Hungary or Poland, with its good old days and good old ways, before the multitude of heresies afflicted Judaism.

They make very few converts, either from the larger Jewish population around them, in New York or Israel, or from the Gentile population anywhere.

In 1965, their then leader in Jerusalem, Amram Blau, married a convert and a furious battle developed within the community. Today, the widow is a leading figure in the group. But the Israeli newspaper accounts of the times, followed with intense interest in Israel by a public which cheered on the devoted couple, confirmed the public opinion that they were, by and large, hopelessly backward.

It is of course impossible for them to avoid using the state's money. But they never use its postage stamps to send mail abroad. They have what amounts to their own post office, with mail drops at various yeshivas, and travellers abroad taking the mail to their destinations and mailing the letters there. They never fly El-Al airlines and when they enter the country they never allow customs to put an Israeli entry stamp into their passports.

(They retain foreign passports. Israel permits many foreign visitors to omit the stamp in as much as many plan to go on to Arab states.)
None of their youth serve in the army, nor do they pay taxes. They receive any benefits from the government.

Their influence on the Jews around them is nil, at least when it comes to anti-Zionism. My experience with them, in both Israel and the US, is that prior to the intifada, there was little contact between them and leftist anti-Zionists, who oppose as atheists. This seems to be breaking down to a degree in New York after the revolt. To some extent the fault is mutual as many self-styled leftists in the US support the continued existence of Israel and don't want them around their "peace movements" which advocate a two-state solution.

In the US, their representatives occasionally appear with PLO officials at press conferences. But, until the uprising, they never marched on picket lines with Palestinians. The reasons usually given for not appearing at joint lines with the Palestinians and leftists varied. But of course they would never march on Friday nights or Saturdays, common times for such events.

Orthodox men all thank God, every morning, that He did not create them as a woman. They are male chauvinists to the bone. It was only in recent years that they allowed their men in New York to drive cars. Their women still do not. I believe they avoid participating with others in anti-Zionist meetings because they do not want to be in the company of "immodestly dressed women," women wearing short sleeves or short skirts. And they dread being in contact with Jewish women who might be menstruating and ritually defile them.

Everywhere they denounce legalized abortion. In the United States, their magazine, The Jewish Guardian, not only denounced the Equal Rights Amendment, but morbidly insisted on repeated occasions that under it and repeatedly...
there would be unisex public toilets, a proposal made by absolutely no one.

Their male chauvinism is even more brazen in Jerusalem. They put up signs in the Mea Shearim, warning "immodestly dressed women" from appearing on their streets. They are infamous for attacking such women. In Israel, they proudly support some of their followers who have burned bus kieke shutters displaying because they have had ads for women's bathing suits.

It must be emphasized that they do not believe in freedom of religion for Jews in Palestine. I. Domb, one of their leading writers, wrote an article on Blau for the June 1975 issue of the Guardian. He described how Blau recognized the British mandate. However,

He knew that according to English law one must not act against the liberty of the citizen, who is free to behave as he wishes. But all this does not apply to Jews, since English law allows them to desecrate the holy sabbath and the whole Torah, and the laws of the Torah do not allow them to take advantage of this liberty. He protested against anything, public or private, that conflicted with the laws of the Holy Torah. He stood in the Mea Shearim week after week to protest immodest dress.

They are never brazen enough to try any of this in the United States. Nor do they block off traffic through the streets of Williamsburg on Saturdays as they do in the Mea Shearim. They do not dare because they know the cops wouldn't tolerate such actions for a hot second. In Palestine, however, they feel they are on holy turf and have the right, nay the duty, to violate other Jews' rights, particularly women.

Network and the Governor of Palestine

This is very important. These kinds of medieval activities, particularly their unending male chauvinism, determine how Israeli and American Jews see them. In life, their theological anti-Zionism has made some of the more thoughtful of them specialists in the realities of Middle Eastern politics and quite compassionate in their awareness of the Palestinians' suffering under the Zionist yoke. But that is not what comes across to many Israelis.
Instead they are seen simply as religious fanatics and killjoys. Their anti-Zionism is thought of as just another piece of medieval madness, along with fur hats and male chauvinism. This cannot be ignored when dealing with Hirsch's request that one of them be made Minister of Jewish Affairs in a Palestinian government.

By their own claim, they represent no more than 1.5% of the Jews of Palestine. It would be gross for the PLO to make a representative of this miniscule group the Minister of Jewish Affairs. Do Protestants pick the Pope? There is no doubt whatsoever that their anti-Zionist stance is the classic position of the Talmud. And Chairman Arafat has, correctly, called them "an integral part" of "the Palestinian people." Their community has been in the land for at least two centuries, far longer than the Zionists and some Arabs. If the PLO wishes to emphasize its non-sectarian nature it could do far worse than to allow them, and other Jews, membership in the PLO. It would be entirely proper for one or more followers of the Neturei Karta to be elected to any Palestinian parliament, or even to have such a person as a cabinet minister. It would be their full right, as indubitable Palestinians, to sit in any anti-Zionist body. But to appoint an unrepresentative person as a religious figure, because he agrees with the political anti-Zionist line of the PLO would be bad theology and worse politics.

Those Jews who consider themselves religious have the full right to change or abandon the religion given them by their ancestors, in any way they see fit, consistent with peaceful relations with their neighbors.

If Moshe Hirsch thinks some Jewish woman's clothing is immodest, he need only look away. He does not have the right to bar her from the streets of Jerusalem. Nor would he have the right to bar her from any Jewish shrine or synagogue. And this is exactly what Minister Hirsch would most definitely do if he had the power.

In a press release, dated January 10, 1988, Hirsch told the press...
that he would gladly serve in the position of Minister of Jewish Affairs if the Naturei Karta would be granted. The press release praised Arafat's emphasis on the distinction between Judaism and Zionism, and between a secular government and a non-sectarian one.

The notion of a democratic, secular Palestine is a mistranslation of the Arafat leadership's early conception of what kind of state they wanted. It is no secret that the rulers of the surrounding Arab states, all of them enemies of democracy, are likewise opposed to secularism. And it is well known that the PLO's leaders want their patronage. Therefore they do not intend to establish a secular Palestine, with complete separation of religion and state. Instead, their Declaration of Independence was full of references about God, designed to please the reigning despots in the Arab world. They now talk about a non-sectarian state instead. They mean a state which will 'recognize' God in its constitution, but guarantee equality before the law for all religions. Hirsch and his friends want a state where they, as Jews, would have equality with Muslims and Christians. But, in anything concerning Jews, Moshe Hirsch is to be the boss.

In a letter from the Naturei Karta to the PLO, dated November 29, 1988, Moshe Hirsch wrote: "We are not the Foreign Minister's \\
which we may be sure was written by the Foreign Minister. I find the following:

One of the functions of the Minister for Jewish Affairs— a post offered to us by the Honorable Chairman of the PLO in his recent address during a seminar on 'The protection of religious holy places and culture in Palestine in Cairo will be to reorientate and absorb such Jews into the Palestinian state.'

What does would-be Minister Hirsch think his duties would extend to?

In a statement dated November 27, 1985, Hirsch declared:

The Naturei Karta are looking forward for the day that the Palestinian state will be established. We will then be assured of the safeguarding
of the Holiness of the spiritual citadel of the world. The Karta Foreign Minister was referring to the recent sentencing to a year in prison of a member of his community. The "crime" he was accused of was the removing of a profane and obscene poster, provocatively placed in a bus shelter in the heart of a religious quarter in Jerusalem.

This writer spent two and a half months living in the Mea Shearim in 1983, in contact with the leading figures of the movement. As individuals they are fine, decent people. But on certain questions of religion they are fanatics to the nth power. Hirsch sees the intifada slowly making Zionism retreat. He fanatically interprets this to mean that God is defeating Zionism. Given his fanaticism he will, for certain, translate the growing power of the PLO into 'God's mandate' for him to attack any and all Jews, Zionist or anti-Zionist, who 'Minister' Hirsch believes desecrates Judaism.

We may be absolutely certain that we will see more, not less, violence by Hirsch's followers against perfectly innocent women who happen to be wearing short sleeves. For the PLO to appoint this crackpot to a religious position would only further inflame his mind. He would commit actions that would be an embarrassment to the PLO which would only alienate the millions of Jews in Palestine and abroad who are beginning to protest the threat of increased rabbinical domination of their lives. These modern Jews can be won over to the notion of a democratic secular Palestine. Indeed they must be won over if the whole of the land is to be eventually liberated from Zionism. Their good will, in the long run, is more important than the support of a few thousand fanatics, won by pandering to their madness.

Hirsch says he hopes for the annexation of the Mea Shearim to a Palestinian state. If the Palestinians get their minstate they will perforce, recognize Israel. It is highly unlikely that Arafat would insist on a readjustment of the border to include the Mea Shearim in his state.

However, as the neighborhood is on what would be the border, it is remotely possible that a riot there could create an international incident,
an already demoralized Zionist regime. Under such circumstances progressives would be bound to support the right of the Neturei Karta to be annexed, exactly as we would support any demonstration on behalf of the Arabs of Galilee. But, even then, it would not be in the interest of the ultimate reunification of the whole of Palestine for anyone in the Neturei Karta to become some kind of Minister for Jewish Affairs. A Jewish minister in a Palestinian cabinet. Of course, even if his name is Moshe Hirsch, provided that he is the minister in charge of some secular department, not Jewish Affairs, have passed out.

As a test, Arafat will be recognizing Israel if he is to be getting his mini-state at the hands of the American imperialists. It is unlikely that he would do more than go through the motions of requesting that the Mea Shearim be incorporated into his state if that. But the Neturei Karta, under Blau, once asked King Hussein of Jordan for the right to emigrate there, rather than stay in Israel. Hussein ignored the request. Were they to make the request again, to Prime Minister Arafat, it would emphatically be in the interest of the ongoing revolution for them to be admitted with full rights. Their inclusion in the state would add to its prestige and would be a blow to Zionism’s claim to represent either the Jewish people or the Jewish religion.

To sum up: The Neturei Karta are victims of Zionism. They are Jewish Palestinians, acknowledged to be Palestinians. Therefore, they are entitled to the full rights that all Palestinians would then have in a sovereign state, including election to the highest posts. But, for now, the PLO has no interest whatsoever in the length of a Jewish woman’s sleeves, not on any street in Jerusalem, not in any Jewish holy place. To put official religious power into the hands of a representative of religious bigots who believe they have the right and the duty to try to get against such a woman is to court disaster. It will set back the cause of unification of the country into a democratic, secular Palestine. Instead, it is the duty of the informed to warn the PLO of the consequences of such an act.