

Dear Rabbi Lamm,

I just got the latest issue of Tradition and read your article on the Ideology the Neturei Karta. There are a few points I would like to raise and also ask you a few questions. I hope you do not mind!

To begin with a general impression. To me your presentation of the ideology seems to be clothed in a sort of "sympathetic regret". You agree, that fundamentally the basis of Neturei Karta stands on very shaky grounds. But one has a feeling "It could have been so nice, if it only could have been true". Waiting in the Galuth anywhere as long as life was normal or bearable, then seek refuge in a more favourable place, until one day miraculously the Maschiach would appear and bring us all back to our land. We all have been brought up somehow on this idea, and may feel at times sort of nostalgic to realize our error. I also do think we never visualized this ingathering of our people in a concrete way, no one pondered much how this coming back would technically materialize, as it was to be miraculous. (Incidentally Chaim Hazaz once said something like: Jews always pray for the Maschiach to come, but deep in their hearts they pray, that the gentile should no be too bad towards them.) Convinced of our belief of the return to Eretz Israel, we rejected at a great majority Zionism at its very beginning, no one could conceive redemption initiated by the most secular and atheistic group of Jews.

I am not challenging here the Neturei Karta, but would like to ask you, how can the Satmarer Rav pretend that the holocaust was a result and punishment of the Zionists challenging Hitler and declaring war on Germany? Hitler published his attitude towards the Jewish people and the Jews well before he came to power. If an affirmation is based on the very beginning on wrong facts, then of course all that happened later can be derived accordingly.

Why do you find at times the logic of the Satmarer Rav piquant? (p 51)

The idea if God would have wanted our return to the old City, He could have arranged so legitimately;;;;;. But could the question "if God would have wanted to" not be asked constantly and on all levels, and thus everything turned out as it should?

Also why should we admire the courage of a group of people who stick so stubbornly to their convictions, if we feel that those are harmful? People thoroughly convinced of their ideal usually fight courageously, but one can only admire this if the cause and means are just ones. (Here one could say the cause is just but the means for achievement wrong.)

One last question, I do not want to impose on you too much! Why do you call the medicine of the Neturei Karta too strong for an illness it seeks to cure?

Lacking the right ingredients the medicine is not too strong, but not the right one. I am not going as far as you to say, that the symptoms of the illness of an inflated view of its own power are not really shown. To some extent they do show and could use the right medicine. But which one would be acceptable for those groups, even if not yet for actual "swallowing" but at least to be put on the shelf? Those who have faith and believe know the value of prayer, learning the saying of Tehilim and the like. We felt especially at the time of the 6th day war the united effort of the physical and spiritual aspects. But how to convey those to the purely secular nationalistic and often so strongly anti-religious circles?

I would be very glad to hear from you although I know you are overburdened with tasks.

Thanking you in advance and looking forward to "some answers" with best regards to you and Mrs Lamm

Yours
Ruth Weil