

'Zionism today is the real enemy of the Jews': opposed by Melanie Phillips

Ladies and gentlemen. The Jewish people currently face:

- war by terror as latest phase in hundred year attempt to ethnically cleanse them from historic homeland in Palestine and Israel
- the delegitimisation of their homeland through systematic lies, libels, distortions and omissions
- a firestorm of anti-Jewish hatred and prejudice emanating from the Muslim world
- a Palestinian society which is indoctrinated from the cradle in religious hatred of Jews and is incited to murder them
- assaults on Jews throughout Europe, the bombing of synagogues and the desecration of cemeteries
- an upsurge of anti-Jewish hatred in Britain and the west, with the promulgation in the mainstream media and intellectual and political circles of ancient canards such as the global Jewish conspiracy.

You may think these are enemies enough. But according to the proposers of this motion, these are not the real enemy of the Jews. The real enemy is themselves.

Professor Shlaim tells us he is not opposed to Zionism, merely Israel's policies post the 1967 occupation of the territories. He cannot get away with this. For this is not what the motion says. Let me remind you of the title — that 'Zionism today is the real enemy of the Jews'. But Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people.

This motion tells us that if it wasn't for Israel's existence, none of the list I have just given would be happening. This is because it tells us that not only the behaviour of Israel is malign, but Zionism is inherently malign.

So let's look at this charge sheet against Israel.

We are told that it is Israel's fault that there is no Palestinian state. Not so. The Arabs were offered two states, one for the Jews and one for the Palestinians, in 1937, in 1947, and in 2000. Each time the Arabs refused and tried instead to destroy the Jewish presence in first Palestine and then Israel.

We are told that Israel illegally invaded Palestinian land in 1967 as an aggressive act of expansion. Not true. It was Egypt and Jordan actually who had invaded them as an act of aggression in 1948-49. Israel did not set out to occupy these territories but took them as a defensive measure after the Six Day War which was waged against it and is legally entitled to hold them while there is no peace.

We are told that Israel is an apartheid state — not so. The Arabs in Israel have the vote, sit in the Knesset, can be members of the supreme court, and serve in the army.

We are told that Israel is brutal towards the Palestinians in the territories. I acknowledge that incidents of rough treatment or humiliation of Palestinians do occur, are reprehensible and should be punished.

But one would expect to find such lapses by any army facing such a situation. All Israel is doing is trying to defend its people from being wiped out. In the context of a 50-year existential war waged against it, following half a century of attempted ethnic cleansing of the Jews of Palestine before that, Israel has behaved overall with a restraint that would not be found in any other country in the world.

We are told that Israel invaded someone else's country — not so. No independent Arab or Palestinian state has ever existed in Palestine. Jewish ties to the land of Israel have existed for more than 3,700 years. When the UN produced its partition plan in 1947 for two states, Jews were a substantial majority in those areas to be allocated for the Jewish state.

We are told that the Jewish presence in Palestine was imposed upon the Arabs against their will. Not so. They originally welcomed it. In January 1919, Emir Faisal Ibn Hussein (later the King of Syria) signed an agreement with the Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann supporting the Balfour Declaration and the adoption 'of all necessary measures... to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale'. In a later letter Faisal wrote: The Arabs, especially the educated among us, look with deepest sympathy on the Zionist movement... We will wish the Jews a hearty welcome home... We are working together for a reformed and revised Near East and our two movements complete one another. The Jewish movement is nationalist and not imperialist'.

We are told that the Jews displaced the Palestinians. Not so. The Arabs who lived in early 20th century Palestine never regarded themselves as Palestinians — they said the term was invented by the Jews. Some were nomadic Bedouin, others saw themselves as southern Syrians. In early part of 20th century, Arabs from neighbouring states flooded into Palestine, many

thousands of them illegally, because the returning Jews had brought such prosperity to the land.

The motion tells us that Zionism has caused attacks on the Jews. But the historical truth is that it was attacks on the Jews that caused rise of modern Zionism.

It was the Dreyfus affair, where a French Jewish army captain was wrongly accused of treason, which led to Herzl becoming a Zionist – not the other way round.

It was the pogroms on Russia which led to the rise of political Zionism – not the other way round.

Attacks on the Jews in Palestine derived from the religious animosity of the Muslims – not the other way round.

The continuing attack on Israel has nothing to do with Israel's behaviour. It is rooted in a religiously-based desire to remove Jews from the land, and on virulent anti-Jewish prejudice.

Thus the Palestinian Charter demands the transfer out of Palestine of every Jew except those who were there before beginning of 'Zionist invasion', presumably in the 1880s. The Hamas charter goes further and invokes the libel of the Protocols of Elders of Zion as proof of how Jews behave.

There are repeated calls to murder Jews and destroy Israel in mosques around Islamic world and on Palestinian TV. The constant message is that, according to Islam, Jews are an evil force who have to be killed. Thus the Rector of the Islamic university in Gaza, Dr Ahmad abu Halabia, said in 2000 that the Jews 'must be butchered and killed'; 'have no mercy on the Jews, wherever they are, in any country'.

But instead of identifying the true threat to the Jews, the billions who wish to murder them or destroy their tiny country of refuge, the motion attacks instead the foundation of that country.

For this motion, let me remind you, does not attack Israel. It attacks Zionism.

But Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people. It goes back into antiquity, is rooted in religion but found political expression in response to the persecution of the Jews. The attack on Zionism is an attack on the right to self-determination of the Jewish people in their ancient homeland and their right to this refuge from the hostility of the world.

It is, therefore, a profoundly anti-Jewish motion. It singles the Jews out for unique opprobrium, based on a calumny.

The greatest danger to the Jews is not the national liberation movement which arose from the attempt to destroy the Jewish people. It is the current campaign to destroy Jews as a people.

This motion is no ordinary motion. You are not being asked to vote against Israel's policies. You are being asked to single out the Jews as the one nation on earth not entitled to have their own country.

More than that, this motion repudiates truth and morality.

It means blaming the Jews for their own destruction. This is nothing new. It is an ancient taunt which turns the Jewish victims of violence into murderers. The motion is simply a refinement of the oldest hatred.

I therefore urge you to show your contempt by voting against it.