

## *Editor's Page*

**Alan Johnson**

Slavoj Žižek, the brilliant and prolific social theorist, named his book *Iraq: the Borrowed Kettle* after a joke analysed by Freud. **Josh Cohen** finds an 'undeniably seductive charge' in Žižek's prose, but also, in his arguments, 'a certain theoretical and political *decadence*, a will to gratuitous scandalising that borders on the louche.' He refers to Žižek's call for a strategic opening to Political Islam to keep open the possibility of transformative political action in the face of the attempt by the USA to close that space. Cohen argues instead for political action to 'advance uncompromisingly the primacy of the universal political good against destructively narrow self-interests, be they Western, Ba'athist or Islamist' on the grounds that, 'support for grassroots political reconstruction in Iraq, far from involving capitulation to some nefarious Western agenda, is an exemplary claim for popular control of political space against all the ideological interests seeking to appropriate it.'

Two supporters of that grassroots political reconstruction, **Abdullah Muhsin**, the International Representative of the Iraqi Workers Federation (formerly the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions) and **Gary Kent**, the Director of Labour Friends of Iraq, combine to review a history of the Stop the War Coalition written by its central leaders, Andrew Murray and Lindsey German. While acknowledging the astonishing mobilisations brought off by the coalition in 2003, Muhsin and Kent argue that Murray and German have 'proved far less adept in understanding the consequences of the fall of Saddam.' If one coalition failed to think about what came after the war, another failed to think about what came after 'Stop the War.'

The philosopher **Jon Pike** reviews the expanded, revised edition of Ted Honderich's *After Terror*. Honderich uses the work of Peter Singer and Roberto Unger to establish the 'Principle of Humanity' before grounding support for suicide bombing in that principle. Pike finds the book symptomatic of a range of maladies on the left. In a passionate and sharply critical review he indicts it as analytical sloppy, intellectually dishonest, and politically disastrous.

## Democratiya 2 | Autumn 2005

Robert Ivie's book *Democracy and America's War on Terror* presents the United States of America as a 'distempered democracy,' plagued by 'demophobia,' indeed nothing less than a 'republic of fear.' **Jean Bethke Elshtain** is unpersuaded. While welcoming debate on the war on terror and the critical analysis of political rhetoric she criticises Ivie's combination of wild rhetorical overreach' and the 'dreary' use of postmodern vocabulary and argues that the effect is to avoid treating 'complex phenomena complicatedly and with rigor and nuance.'

Turkey's transition to a democratic state, and entry into the European Union, is blocked not only by Western European Islamophobia and anti-immigrant racism, but also by Turkish genocide-denial. **Marko Attila Hoare** praises Akçam's book as an intelligent, original and well researched study of Turkish nationalism's refusal to confront the reality of the Armenian Genocide.' Hoare's review offers a most thoughtful set of critical reflections on the regional, historical and cultural roots of the genocide that, in toto, carefully amend Akçam's thesis. Both writers concur on the overriding lesson for the EU: the conduct of opportunist European political leaders, from Lloyd George in the 1920s; to an array of cynical contemporary European politicians in search of cheap votes, have helped to sustain Turkish genocide-denial. An evolution in European attitudes to Turkey – acknowledgement of the European genocidal acts against Ottoman Muslims, for a start – as well as an evolution in Turkish attitudes to the Armenian genocide, is required.

**Eve Garrard** reviews Michael Ignatieff's typically careful and balanced discussion of ethics in an 'age of terror.' His resolution of the tension between the security demands of the general good and the moral importance of respect for human rights involves the rejection of two greater evils – a purely consequentialist defence of democracy against terrorism and a perfectionist defence of human rights – and an argument for the 'lesser evil' of trade-offs, adversarial review, and reasoned debate. Garrard, in a meticulous and generous discussion, is unpersuaded by objections that Ignatieff's argument is incoherent but finds more force in the suggestion that some of the ways in which Ignatieff casts the very terms of the security/rights tension are unnecessary and implausible.

In an extended interview the sociologist **Martin Shaw** discusses his ambitious new book *The New Western Way of War* (Polity 2005.) He argues that a new global surveillance mode of warfare has emerged within which two 'ways of war' – terrorist and western risk-transfer – co-exist. He examines the ever-expanding role of the media surveillance of war in post-military societies before discussing why the

## JOHNSON | Editor's Page

Iraq war has caused a 'veritable crisis of the western way of war.' The adequacy of just war thinking is assessed and found wanting. Shaw also examines the ongoing global democratic revolution, of which he is analyst and partisan, suggests that a global renewal of social democracy is imperative, and sharply criticises the theoretical and political failings in some 'anti-imperialist' responses to this global democratic revolution. He defends a non-violent alternative to war and a positive democratic alternative to the inchoate 'anti-imperialist' left.