

Editor's Page

Alan Johnson

What is really at stake in the furore over the Danish cartoons? **André Glucksmann** argues it is nothing less than the defence of the distinction between fact and belief that lies at the heart of western thought. Rejecting the Islamists' charges that Holocaust denial and cartoons of the Prophet are on a par, and that the west is hypocritical, Glucksmann observes that 'The reality of the death camps is a matter of historical fact, whereas the sacredness of the prophets is a matter of personal belief.' And on respect for that distinction, he points out, turns the difference between totalitarian and anti-totalitarian modes of thinking, and a lot else besides.

'By far the best book written on the social and political history of modern Iraq' was the judgement of Ahmad Dallal of Stanford University on the late Hanna Batatu's magnum opus *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*. The 1,284-page classic has been republished by Saqi Books (2005) and is reviewed by **Peter Sluglett**, one of the greatest historians of modern Iraq.

Virginia Tilley's *The One-State Solution: A breakthrough plan for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock* (Manchester University Press, 2005) makes the case for giving up on the 'two-state solution' and embracing the bold policy of a single secular state. **John Strawson** is unconvinced. While acknowledging that Tilley is 'right in seeing the occupation as colonial and racist' he challenges what he sees as simplistic keyhole history, reductive and essentialising accounts of Zionism, and misleading analogies. He argues that two states with mutual recognition remains the still-viable solution to a conflict between two peoples in which 'the real issue has been the mutual denial of the other's right to exist.'

Oliver Kamm reviews Paul Berman's *Power and the Idealists* (Soft Skull Press, 2005) and Noam Chomsky's *Imperial Ambitions* (Hamish Hamilton, 2005). Berman's is a vitally important book for the democratic left, tracing the little-known roots of contemporary humanitarian interventionism in the political odyssey of the 1960s left. Future issues of *Democratiya* will carry further critical responses from Quintin Hoare and Phil Spencer. Paul Berman has agreed to reply.

The difficulties of one particular intervention, in Iraq, is the subject of Part 2 of **Kanan Makiya's** discussion with Alan Johnson. In a remarkable interview, by turns

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bitterly critical of the US administration, disarmingly self-critical, and defiantly optimistic about Iraq's future, Makiya draws the lessons of the Iraq experience.

The title we have given to the interview with Kanan Makiya - 'Putting Cruelty First' – was taken from an essay by the late liberal political theorist **Judith Shklar** (1928-1992). It was first published in *Daedalus* in 1982 and Makiya called it his 'bible' in *Democratiya* 3. We are very pleased to reprint the essay in our Archive section. Michael Walzer commented that Shklar's 1984 book *Ordinary Vices* (in which parts of the original essay were republished) was 'distinguished, full of wit, humanity and insight ... a moral psychology for liberals' – a good description of 'Putting Cruelty First.'

Alan Johnson argued for a social-democratic response to Totalitarian Political Islam in a recent speech to a conference on Albert Camus in Paris. He calls for the broad liberal-left to embrace the doctrine of the international community, a partnership between the US and Europe, respect for our own constitutional identity, a cultural 'cold war' of ideas, urgent international solidarity with democrats in the Arab and Muslim world, and the promotion of global economic development-as-freedom.

Two reviews in *Democratiya* 3 have sparked exchanges. **Larry May** and **Norman Geras** discuss the latter's review of May's, *Crimes Against Humanity: A Normative Approach*, while **Mike Brennan**, **Greg Philo**, **Mike Berry**, and **John Eldridge** debate Brennan's review of *Bad News From Israel*.

A letter from **Gary Kent**, the Director of Labour Friends of Iraq, urges *Democratiya* readers to support *Books For Iraq*, created by Iraqi and UK pharmacists to raise funds for new academic textbooks to the eight schools of Pharmacy within Iraq. An Open Letter, 'End the Silence on Chechnya,' signed by **Vaclav Havel**, **Andre Glucksmann**, **Mary Robinson**, **Desmond Tutu**, and others, concerns the desperate plight of Chechnya. The writers ask, 'Are Chechen women, children and all Chechen civilians less entitled to respect than the rest of mankind?'