

Editor's Page

Alan Johnson

Ladan Boroumand reviews Danny Postel's *Reading Legitimation Crisis in Tehran*. Inspired by Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, Postel reveals the fructifying relationship that has been forged between the classic texts of liberal democracy and democratic resistance to the Mullahs. Postel points out that the western Left's poor record of solidarity with Iranian liberal democrats is a 'serious blind spot,' signalling that 'our solidarity with struggles around the world is determined by George Bush, rather than by our principles.' Ladan Boroumand astutely traces this blind spot to the Iranian revolution itself. Since that event, she argues, 'many Western intellectuals and activists have applauded the defeat of the free individual of the social contract and the resuscitation of a new (and post-communist) brand of selfless individual who is attached to a sacred community through sacrificial bonds.'

The intellectual roots of the shameful treatment of Iranian democrats by many western leftists – '[they] considered us "too Westernised", perhaps too much their equals, and not "native" enough,' says Ladan Boroumand – are traced by the human rights activist **Peter Tatchell** in a powerful and passionate essay. We hope his clear-sighted delineation of very different forms of multiculturalism – progressive and reactionary – and his careful tracing of their divergent political effects will influence the ongoing debate about multiculturalism on the liberal left.

We reproduce the speech given by **Ali Hili** from the gay rights group Iraqi LGBT to the Faith, Homophobia and Human Rights conference in London on Saturday 17 February 2007. Hili reveals the 'daily risk of execution by the Shia death squads of the Badr and Sadr militias,' the inaction on the part of international agencies, and the determination of Iraqi LGBTs to 'defy the religious fundamentalists and win our place in a free and democratic nation.'

Must the terrorist threat be met by a diminution in the rights we hold against the state? To what degree? In what circumstances? In a penetrating essay, **Irfan Khawaja** rejects the answers provided by the jurist Richard Posner in his influential book, *Not a Suicide Pact: The Constitution in a Time of National Emergency*. While Posner is commended for facing up to a real dilemma that is all too often dismissed

on the left, Khawaja is critical of a jurisprudence rooted in 'avowedly contradictory pragmatism' and issuing in a 'wild-eyed defence of unlimited government.'

Are pro-poor redistributive policies feasible in an increasingly integrated global market economy? The answers to this question provided in *Globalization and Egalitarian Redistribution*, edited by Pranab Bardhan, Samuel Bowles and Michael Wallerstein, are assessed by **Richard Sandbrook**. He is underwhelmed by the editors' conclusion – 'globalisation does not rule out egalitarian redistributive reforms at the national level, provided such reforms also enhance productivity or at least do not lower the after-tax rate of return on capital.' Sandbrook points out two major flaws in the work. First, a failure to properly register that 'politics and power relations are central to the success or failure of egalitarian redistribution ... especially the autonomous organisation of the poorer classes in defence of their own interests.' Second, the dynamics of globalisation generate increasing inequality, so changes of national-level economic policy can't be enough for egalitarians: 'Global institutions must also be called into question.'

George Lawson offers an appreciation of the rich historical sociology of Saskia Sassen, praising her latest book, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, as 'a tour de force, a work of impeccable scholarship and boldness ... which cements Sassen's place as one of the world's most important intellectual figures.' Taking the last five centuries of history as her canvas, Sassen draws analytical pathways that 'unravel the extent of the shift from medieval to national to global,' assesses 'how this imbrication of global and national is taking shape,' and examines 'how forms of rule, political economy and citizenship have changed across time and place.'

'[A] cogent and impassioned essay on how ostensibly progressive movements more than made their peace with political and even theocratic reaction' is **Oliver Kamm's** summary of Nick Cohen's important new book *What's Left?: How Liberals Lost Their Way*.

In a speech to the Henry Jackson Society, Jay Lefkowitz, United States Special Envoy on Human Rights in North Korea, discussed the many atrocities of the North Korean regime and issued a challenge: 'Rather than lament and regret the repression and killing of North Koreans, with a Hotel Pyongyang movie a decade from now, we need to combine our efforts to do something about it now.'

André Glucksmann is a valued contributor to Democratiya. His intelligent and beautifully written columns that appear in the quality press of the European mainland (*Le Monde*, *Der Spiegel*, *El Pais*, and *Il Corriere della Sera*) have been translated into English in our pages. He sets out why he will not vote for the Left in the forthcoming French Presidential elections. The Left ‘knew nothing of the spiritual explosion of dissidence in Eastern Europe,’ ‘didn’t give a damn about the Velvet Revolutions, from Prague to Kiev and Tbilisi,’ and has now ‘mislaid the banner of international solidarity.’ Enough is enough. He declares instead for the Conservative candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy, the only candidate today, in Glucksmann’s opinion, to ‘place himself in [a] large-hearted French tradition.’ Sarkozy ‘broke with every tradition of the right’ to claim to stand ‘for the rebels and the oppressed’ around the world. Glucksmann asks us not to bemoan the way Sarkozy has appropriated the socialist legacy, but to rejoice. ‘When I recognise Victor Hugo, Jean Jaurès, Georges Mandel, Jacques Chaban-Delmas and Albert Camus in this candidate’s speeches, I feel somewhat at home.’

In response, **Philip Spencer** suggests an alternative analysis of Sarkozy – as a figure who was and is part and parcel of the right-wing Government whose foreign policy record has been appalling, a domestic opportunist on the question of race, and, at the same time, a promoter of Muslim communalism. Spencer also proposes an alternative political response to the deep failings of the French left: a struggle for the ‘reformation of the left itself, by those who are committed to the left’s basic and most fundamental beliefs: equality, liberty and solidarity at home and abroad.’ We are very grateful to Tristan Stubbs for translating *Why I Choose Nicolas Sarkozy*.

Jules Townshend reviews books about, respectively, the variety of fundamentalisms in the modern world, and the growth of identity politics. *Empires of Belief: Why We Need More Scepticism And Doubt In The Twenty-First Century*, by Stuart Sim, offers a ‘a cri de coeur in the face of the gathering darkness of many forms of fundamentalism that threaten to undermine the Enlightenment project.’ Simon Thompson’s *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction* dissects the thought of three Hegel and/or Critical Theory-influenced thinkers associated with the politics of recognition – Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser. Townshend defends the analysis of structures and systems against an exclusive reliance on Lyotardian ‘little narratives’ (which, he points out, can also become a form of dogmatism). And, in terms that echo Peter Tatchell, Townshend observes that ‘the language of recognition especially in its group form (substantive and ethical as opposed to procedural and universal) can be exclusionary.’

Questions of uncertain authorial identity underlie **David Clark's** disappointment with Michael Burleigh's *Sacred Causes: Religion and Politics from the European Dictators to al Qaeda*. Burleigh's failure to reconcile the personas of academic historian and right wing newspaper columnist has produced an uneven book, claims Clark. Acute insight into the 'sacred' politics of the various totalitarianisms is mixed with common or garden prejudice. Withering criticism of Islamists' misogyny and homophobia sits cheek by jowl with Jerry Falwell-esque diatribe about western decadence. In the end, concludes Clark, Burleigh's book is a symptom of 'the confusion ... in the Christian conservative response to 9/11.'

Bogusia Puchalska reviews Kelly M. McMann's *Economic Autonomy and Democracy: Hybrid Regimes in Russia and Kyrgyzstan* – a study of 'the link between individual economic independence from the state with proclivity to engage in politics in opposition to the state.' McMann establishes a positive correlation between these two variables but Puchalska questions the degree of economic autonomy enjoyed in actually existing post-communist market economies, and points out that 'Post-communist countries owe their status to [the political participation of] millions of people who lacked economic autonomy in the sense suggested by McMann.' She suggests that a better theoretical model is Amartya Sen's *Development as Freedom* (1999, OUP) which offers 'a much richer and more reflective view on the relation between economic development, democratic politics and individual freedom.'

Jean Bethke Elshtain reviews Richard Bernstein's 2002 book *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation*. At that time Bernstein wished to retain a language of evil in the face of what he saw as the 'irrelevance of theodicy' and he offered 'a rich repast as he traverses the terrain of continental thought' – Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Nietzsche, Freud, Jonas, Levinas, Arendt. But Elshtain finds Bernstein's 2002 argument to lack bite. She argues that a prudential 'Aristotelian' approach to evil is able to help us to focus on behaviour in the public realm, and on the duties of those with responsibility for its protection. Approaches to evil which exhibit a 'will to interiorise,' to therapeutise and to focus on inner motivations are less valuable and can underpin 'why do they hate us?' laments.

Our archive section is given over to the 1948 'Third Force' memos of **Ernest Bevin**, Foreign Secretary in the British Labour Government of 1945-51, published in their entirety for the first time, and introduced by **Alan Johnson**. With the Stalinist take-over of Eastern Europe in full flow, Bevin called on the Labour Government to 'give the lead in spiritual, moral and political sphere [sic] to all democratic elements

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in Western Europe which are anti-Communist and, at the same time, genuinely progressive and reformist, believing in freedom, planning and social justice – what one might call the ‘Third Force.’ He reminded his colleagues that ‘What we have to offer in contrast to totalitarian Communism and laissez-faire capitalism, are the vital and progressive ideas of British Social Democracy and Western European civilisation.’

Saad Eddin Ibrahim has been called Egypt’s Vaclav Havel. A Professor of Political Sociology at the American University in Cairo, he founded the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies and is one of the Arab world’s most prominent spokesmen for democracy and human rights. In an extended interview with Alan Johnson, Ibrahim explores the fateful encounter of Islam and the Arab world with modernity and democracy, and assesses the prospects for Islamic reformation and Arab democratisation. He also examines the symbiotic relationship between the region’s autocrats and theocrats, before turning to the prospects for progress in Iraq.

Lyn Julius responds to Rayyan Al-Shawaf’s review of Abbas Shibliak’s *Iraqi Jews: A History of Mass Exodus*.