Editor’s Page

Alan Johnson

Does the two-state solution remain viable after the conflict in Gaza, and if so what are the obstacles to its realisation? We posed these questions to a range of writers. Michael Walzer argues that two states is in bad shape, but remains the only viable solution and can be advanced by a combination of ‘internal unilateralism’ on both sides, and greater support by the US and EU. John Strawson argues the time has come for the international community to consider compelling the two parties to reach a compromise. Ghada Karmi makes the case for the one-state solution as realistic not utopian, while Donna Robinson Divine calls for both sides to go beyond those constitutive narratives around which identities have hardened and which have blocked progress. Martin Shaw calls for 1948 to be revisited as well as 1967 and for the idealism of the one-state solution to inform the two-state solution, while Alex Stein argues none of the existing ‘solutions’ remain viable and what’s really needed is imagination and radical new ideas. Menchem Kellner and Fred Seigel and Sol Stern warn of the dangers of moving towards two states without a radical change of attitude towards Israel by the Palestinian leaderships, while Eric Lee surveys the trade unions reaction to the conflict in Gaza.

We continue our examination of the nature of a progressive response to Islamism and violent extremism with pieces from Gina Khan, who has been reading Ayaan Hirsi Ali in Birmingham, and Rashad Ali who demolishes a series of Islamist myths about ‘Sharia’ from a scholarly Islamic perspective. Simon Cottee writes in praise of Ian Buruma’s book Murder in Amsterdam, and Samuel Helfont offers a thoughtful critique of Noah Feldman’s recent book on the ‘Islamic State.’ Reza Aslan, author of No god But God and How to Win a Cosmic War, explores the struggle for the soul of Islam, and the need for us to get beyond the ‘war on terror,’ in a fascinating extended interview. Tim Stevens explores the tensions between counterterrorism and liberal democracy.

Will Marshall sets out the ‘central drama’ of the Obama presidency, while Lawrence J. Haas carefully explores the four challenges facing the new administration and the policy options open to the new President. Joschka Fischer, the former German Foreign Minister, draws up a ‘to do’ list for Europeans who wish to preserve the Atlantic Alliance and take forward the European project.
Michael J. Thompson is provocative and engaged in a way few writers are these days about the future of social democracy. On that note, Ethan Porter charts the lunacy of the financial system and the opening it has provided for a social democratic agenda, while Paul Thompson, who edited the social democratic journal Renewal for fourteen years, offers an appreciation, and a critique, of a new book by Democratiya advisory editor Nick Cohen.

Matthew Omolesky explores the contemporary meaning of Miltonic freedom in a comprehensive account of the recent controversy concerning Mark Steyn's encounter with the Canadian courts. Gary Kent reviews Henry MacDonald's recent book which seeks to debunk Sinn Fein's account of the Northern Ireland Peace Process, while Michael Ezra has gone back to the archives to tell the story of an early post-Leftist, Malcolm Caldwell, whom he indicts as an 'apologist for Pol Pot.' Eric Litwack carefully thinks through the arguments for and against reparations for Africa, while Dick Wilson, former Director of East European Affairs at the Free Trade Union Institute of the AFL-CIO, writes a fascinating memoir-cum-analysis of the controversial reform programme of Yegor Gaidar in the Yeltsin era.

The Arts section contains a beautiful essay from Chahandras Choudoury on Gandhi's Autobiography, a plangent poem from Kevin Higgins, and a hymn of praise to the eclectic US 'newspaper of the imagination,' First of the Month, from Tom Hale (which promoted a brief exchange between its editor Benj Demott and Hale)

Our Archive section publishes two documents by the US socialist Susan Green, taken from the 1949 dispute on the US left about the attitude socialists should adopt towards military conflicts between democratic and totalitarian forces when they are clear-sighted and honest enough to admit that there is no possibility of a 'third camp' alternative in any relevant time-frame.

The Letters Page carries an appeal from Richard Greeman of the Victor Serge Centre concerning the recent spate of attacks on democrats in Russia.