

Editor's Page

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Issue 7 of Democratiya is dominated by writing about the State of Israel, the threat of terrorism, and the future of progressive internationalism.

Before 1948 there were 800,000 Jews living in Arab countries, today there are perhaps 8,000. **Rayyan Al-Shawaf** reviews a groundbreaking account of the mass exodus / expulsion of the Iraqi Jews from the homeland of which they had been a part for three millennia. Written by the Palestinian writer and academic, Abbas Shibliak, *The Iraqi Jews: A History of Mass Exodus* (Saqi, 2005) is a well-documented account of what Peter Sluglett calls, in his preface, a 'shabby, squalid and deeply tragic story.' Al-Shawaf compares the claims of Abbas Shibliak and Moshe Gat concerning the identity of those responsible for the bombings of 1950 and 1951 which played an important role in the exodus of the Iraqi Jews.

Mary Kreutzer is an NGO activist working in Iraqi Kurdistan. She travelled to Israel to make a film about the Holocaust survivor Karl Pfeifer and, at the urging of her Iraqi friends, tracked down some of those expelled Iraqi Jews. She sends our readers a Letter from Israel in which she shares 'the sense of possibility I felt in these conversations, and in the enthusiasm of my Iraqi friends, when I bring news of their old neighbours.'

In Democratiya 6 Shalom Lappin reviewed Jacqueline Rose's *A Question of Zion* (Princeton, 2005) a psychoanalytic study of the legacy of Zionism and the Holocaust for the State of Israel. In Democratiya 7 **Jacqueline Rose** replies at length to Lappin's criticisms of her book, prompting a rejoinder from **Shalom Lappin**.

Eran Kaplan's book *The Jewish Radical Right: Revisionist Zionism and Its Ideological Legacy* (University of Wisconsin, 2005) concerns 'the dark side of the Zionist dream.' **Evan Daniel** discusses Kaplan's account of the leading revisionist, Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky, his legacy and its relevance to contemporary Israeli politics. Daniel praises a book that, 'escape[s] the stifling and stale divide between laudatory hagiography and vindictive political screeds.'

Eric Lee is not convinced that the recent conflict between Israel and Hizbollah in Lebanon was the debacle for the state of Israel, as has been widely portrayed. Indeed he suggests, perhaps controversially, that 'this war, like its eerily-similar counterpart in 1973' may even lead to progress in the peace process.

The continuing threat from terrorism is the subject of several contributions. **Peter Ryley** reviews *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2004). Mark Sedgwick's book has contemporary political importance because it helps free our understanding of Islamism from the narrow theory of totalitarianism which, in Ryley's view, oversimplifies the appeal and misunderstands the nature of the Islamist movement. To explain the regressive, nostalgic utopia and extreme religiosity of Islamism we need to examine its relationship to other anti-modernist movements, not least the anti-democratic and anti-Western Traditionalism so scrupulously examined in Sedgwick's book.

Anja Havedal, an NGO activist, sends a sobering letter from Kabul, in which hope and determination is mixed with growing alarm at the failure to make progress. 'The hope gained upon seeing turbaned men walking their daughters to school dissipates as I am reminded that informal councils, or *shuras*, still measure justice by the number of young virgins owed by one family to another. The optimism I feel when reading about anti-corruption measures is crushed when a Ministry of Justice clerk tries to get a kickback from selling me a hard copy of the Constitution. And no matter how strong the sense of accomplishment, it is instantly replaced by a bitter taste of fear when a suicide attack makes the windows tremble. (...) Havedal's warning is blunt. 'If the reconstruction effort does not begin to improve the lives of the Afghan majority soon, the Taliban will have recruited the villagers by the time we get there.'

In *Terrorist*, John Updike's 2006 novel, Ahmad, the 18-year-old son of an American mother and an Egyptian exchange student, embraces Islam and is recruited to blow up the Lincoln Tunnel. *Terrorist* has sold more copies than any Updike novel since 1968, but has polarised the critics. (Christopher Hitchens reported that he sent the book 'wind milling across the room in a spasm of boredom and annoyance.') **Jonathan Derbyshire** argues that Updike had a chance to bring 'a distinctively *novelistic* kind of sympathy capable of disclosing to us areas of experience inaccessible to journalists or pamphleteers.' But by creating a protagonist whose 'politics and theology appear in the novel as so many undigested lumps of ideology' Updike

has sealed Ahmad 'inside those Islamist convictions in such a way as to stymie any genuine exploration of his motives.'

Peace activist **Bob Glaberson** reviews *Al Qaeda Now: Understanding Today's Terrorists*, an edited collection based on a 2004 conference held in Washington (Cambridge University Press, 2005). In Glaberson's view, the categories of thought dominant on parts of the liberal-left make a sober reckoning with terrorism very difficult. 'Blowback' prevents a sober assessment of its independent sources, while 'resistance' displaces a clear-headed understanding of its fascistic character. Beneath the formal denunciations, thinks Glaberson, the result can be the spread of an appeasing spirit that makes political resistance to all forms of international political terrorism harder to sustain.

William Arthurs reviews J.C Brisard's *Zarqawi: the New Face of al-Qaeda* (Polity, 2005) 'a detailed biographical account of Zarqawi's life and career as a terrorist, based on original research, together with details of his connections with Islamist terror groups that have operated under the umbrella of al Qaeda.'

Stephen De Wijze offers a nuanced examination of a legal and moral debate that has raged on the US liberal-left since 9/11, and certainly since the leaking of the 'torture memos' from the upper-reaches of the Bush administration. The relationship of liberalism and torture in a time of terror is the subject of *The Torture Debate in America*, a collection of important essays edited by Karen J. Greenberg (Cambridge University Press, 2006). In a lengthy and scrupulously careful discussion De Wijze spurns all easy answers. While fiercely opposing any normalisation of torture he doubts it is sustainable to oppose torture, in principle, without exception, no matter what the circumstances. 'There can be no definitive answer to the question of whether torture could ever be justified, since our intuitions coupled to careful reasoning tell us both that torture is a terrible evil never to be used, and that it must be employed in a very small number of terrible situations as an abhorrent yet necessary means to a worthwhile end. In short, some situations make dirty hands unavoidable...'

David Held is one of the world's leading experts on the dynamics of globalisation – and one of the most creative thinkers about the retooling of democratic theory and social democratic practice that globalisation demands. Held spoke at length to Democratiya in late November about his 2004 book, *The Global Covenant*. He set out his critique of the Washington consensus, the Washington Security Agenda,

outlined his social democratic alternative, and replied to those critics of his attempt to renew the meaning and potency of social democracy for a global age.

In 1941 **Léon Blum** issued a defiant call for the 'noble and magnificent creation' of the League of Nations not to be abandoned. 'If we have the courage to ignore the mockery' he wrote, 'we must agree that we shall yet have to return to the same inspiration.' Blum was the pre-war (1936-7, 1938) and post-war (1946-7) Prime Minister of France. After the Nazi invasion of 1940 his anti-Vichy stance led to his deportation to Germany and imprisonment in Buchenwald from April 1943 until April 1945. The ambition of Blum's internationalist vision is a fitting archival accompaniment to the Democratiya interview with David Held.

After the war, Léon Blum became head of the French mission to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). And it is the role of the United Nations in realising the internationalism of Blum's vision that is the subject of **Rob Jenkins'** review of Paul Kennedy's *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations* (Random House, 2006). Jenkins writes powerfully on the little-noticed contribution of the UN to the spread of the human development and human security agenda, the apotheosis of which was the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals – targets for improving human well-being on a global scale agreed by world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000.

The kind of internationalism the left needs – and the rather dubious kind it is often fatally attracted to – is the subject of **David R. Adler's** review of Jesse Larner's *Forgive Us Our Spins: Michael Moore and the Future of the Left* (Wiley, 2006). While Larner admits Moore 'has brought important issues of social justice to the attention of people who would otherwise not know of them' he sets out carefully why 'Moore is a disturbing public leader for many liberals.' Adler himself makes the left-wing case against Michael Moore with the nuance so often lacking, and the verve so often present, in his subject.

The Editors urge readers to respond to the **letter** appealing for solidarity with Mansour Osanloo, the Iranian trade union leader arrested on November 19, 2006.