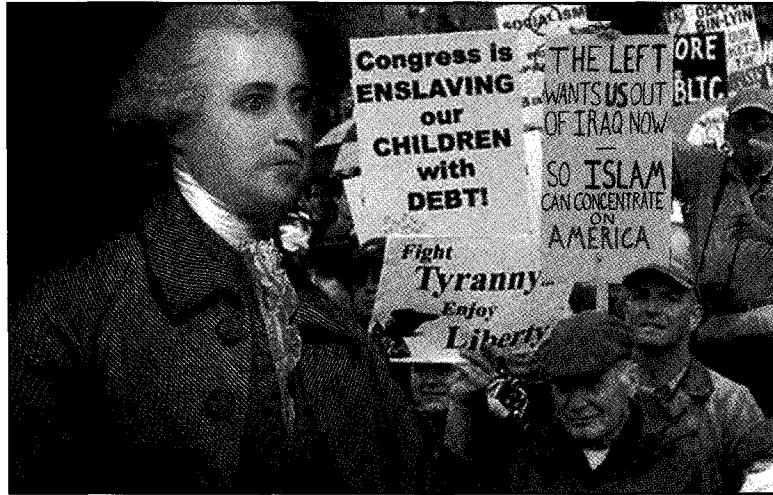


Obama's Right-Wing Cheerleaders

Rah-Rah Government Intervention!

by Leon Hadar



The Tea Partiers and the Town Hallers are clearly angry that the Obama administration so quickly began to pursue policies that run contrary to traditional conservative values—values that are based on skepticism of, if not hostility toward, the role of government in the management of human affairs. Indeed, if there was one thing that used to define American conservatives it was the philosophical axiom that the state and its political class have neither the moral right nor the administrative capability to direct people's lives. So is it really surprising that so many conservatives, ranging from the FOX News pundit (a term that derives from the Sanskrit *pandita*, meaning “learned”; e.g., Hannity the Learned) to your typical town-hall protester, believe that the federal government under President Barack Obama is committed to expanding the power of the state to promote a militant liberal or social-democratic agenda, including economic collectivism and social engineering at home and abroad?

On second thought, I probably need to scratch my reference to “abroad” in the preceding sentence. Yes, the heated town-hall meetings seem to be rousing to action many who describe themselves as conservatives. They are fuming about last year's \$700 billion bank bailout (which was actually proposed by President George W. Bush) and about President Obama's \$787 billion stimu-

lus package as well as his healthcare reform proposals. The Town Hallers and the Tea Partiers were “part of a phenomenon enabling national conservative groups to galvanize grassroots anger about big government and reshape the debate over President Obama's health care plan. Suddenly, it's the conservatives' turn to be fired up,” *USA Today* concluded.

And cable-television talking heads are also suggesting that the antigovernment rage expressed by these conservative protesters reflects rising fears over schemes allegedly being drawn up by liberals in Washington to raise taxes, to bail out more irresponsible businesses and consumers, to nationalize large chunks of the American economy, to confiscate citizens' guns, to keep alive a hopeless public-education system, to consolidate a multiculturalist program favored by wise Latina women, and more—killing Grandma, for example. These liberals, they say, are intent on using the power of the government, including “propaganda or major infrastructure development to foster social harmony and economic growth”—which is how Wikipedia describes “nation building”—at home.

Still, to the “we're mad as hell, and we're not going to take it anymore” conservatives, standing up to big government stops at the water's edge. Although national conservative groups like the Tea Party Patriots and the more established Freedom Works, led by former House majority leader Dick Armey, are trying to galvanize grassroots anger over the growing power of the federal government,

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this populist fire and fury has been applied in a very selective way. Borrowing a phrase from Uncle Joe (Stalin), you could describe this effort as “Conservatism in One Country.” Many of our irate antistatist conservatives want to see the same U.S. government whose power they decry when it tries to manage the school system in, say, Lebanon, Ohio, managing lots of stuff in, say, Lebanon. In a way, they have become born-again government interventionists, progressive internationalists, and social engineers when it comes to Iraq and other distant countries whose values are alien to most Americans.

We see a certain touch of the theater of the absurd in political experts on television proposing that the GOP has become a “regional party” whose leaders and activists should be considered as political heirs to the proponents of states’ rights in the South. These are the same Republican leaders and conservative activists who are now demanding that we advance the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., in Mesopotamia and the broader Middle East; not here, but there—and everywhere. Just a few weeks before the media frenzy over the healthcare debate, CNN, MSNBC, and FOX were preoccupied—*obsessed* is the better word—with the outcome of the presidential election in Iran and twittering demonstrators in Tehran. The strident calls for Washington to take a more activist role in backing the groups opposed to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—dispensing U.S. government funds to the “pro-democracy” activists or perhaps even conducting a “regime change”—came from the usual right-wing suspects, including Republican politicians and conservative pundits led by former Republican presidential candidate John McCain and the “foreign-policy intellectuals” and armchair strategists at the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and *The Weekly Standard*.

Interestingly enough, it was President Obama’s measured response to the crisis in Iran that reflected the traditional conservative disposition *à la* Edmund Burke, who tended to be skeptical about grandiose nation-building and social-engineering projects at home *and* abroad. One wonders how Burke, a critic of British imperialism, would have reacted to the spectacle of the former Republican administration and its conservative backers in Congress and the media suggesting, on the eve of the war in Iraq, that all you need is, yes, government—a few days and nights of aerial bombing, 140,000 U.S. troops, bureaucrats with good intentions, and economic aid from Washington—and, *voilà!* we have “nation-building” on the shores of the Euphrates or in Hindu Kush, followed by the spread of religious freedom, individual rights, and democracy among members of societies that are just starting to enter the Age of Enlightenment (maybe). Just give government a chance—in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Palestine—and thousands of years of deep-seated hatred among tribal, ethnic, and religious communities will come to a happy end.

That this supposedly conservative narrative was noth-

ing more than a Wilsonian liberal fantasy that ended up producing horrific suffering for millions of people in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Palestine—not to mention the high costs in American life and treasure—has failed to convince American conservatives to return to a traditional mode. The members of the small brigade of antiwar conservatives—yes, we could probably fill one or two phone booths—who tend to blame the Republican establishment and the neoconservative ideologues for the current foreign-policy direction, and who suggest that conservatives in Middle America adhere to a more anti-interventionist agenda, should probably examine the results of a recent *Washington Post*-ABC News poll which concluded that a majority of Americans now see the war in Afghanistan as not worth fighting, and that only one quarter say more U.S. troops should be sent to the country.

Now that sounds to me like the kind of realpolitik sentiments that were traditionally associated with conservatism. But guess what? It was Republican voters who were the most enthusiastic about America’s nation-building project in Afghanistan. While 70 percent of Democrats and 40 percent of independents believed that the war in Afghanistan was not worth fighting, 70 percent of Republicans thought it was exactly what the United States should be doing. Similarly, while 70 percent of liberals and 52 percent of independents said that the costs of fighting the war in Afghanistan outweighed the benefits, 58 percent of conservatives thought the opposite. Moreover, while Democrats and liberals were opposed to the Obama administration’s policy of increasing the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, Republicans and conservatives were in favor of strengthening our military presence there. In fact, a majority of Republicans and conservatives approve of Obama’s handling of the war in Afghanistan.

Or to put it differently, the same Republicans and conservatives—the elites *and* the masses—who are bashing the Obama administration as “socialistic” and “fascistic,” a cross between Stalin and Hitler, seem quite enthusiastic about Obama as imperialist nation-builder. The same conservatives who have warned of the harmful, unintended consequences of government projects have been ignoring concerns that America’s nation-building ventures in Iraq and Afghanistan could not only fail but destabilize the broader Middle East. Moreover, they apparently do not see that these imperialist policies could ignite more anti-American terrorism around the world, not to mention the harmful impact they could have on the growth of U.S. government power and their effect on the economy and civil rights in America.

President Obama seems to be following a more realistic foreign-policy path than his predecessor. In addition to resisting pressure from the Republicans and conservatives—as well as the liberal internationalists and humanitarian interventionists in his own administration and party—to intervene in domestic politics in Iran, not

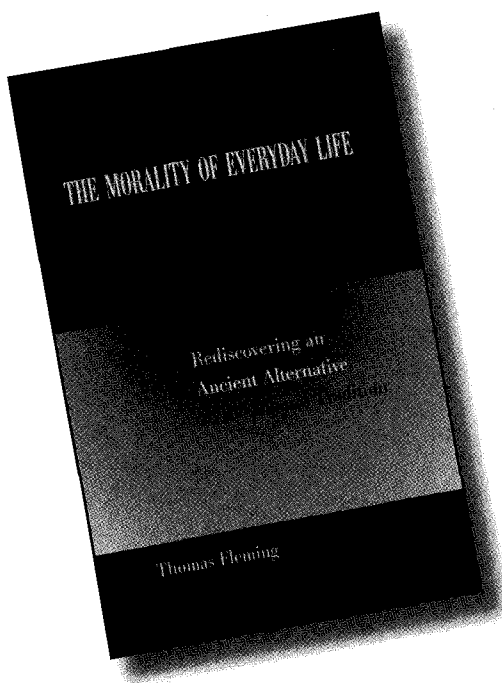
to mention the calls for U.S. and/or Israeli military strikes against Iran's nuclear installations, President Obama has embraced a less aggressive approach in dealing with Russia while placing Bush's Freedom Agenda on the back burner and trying to awaken the dormant Israeli-Palestinian peace process. But his foreign-policy realism is being challenged by his vice president and his secretary of state, who, together with the powerful lobbies of human-rights activists, environmentalists, and feminists, are trying to force him to "do something" about the "threats" of an allegedly revanchist Russia and this or that "rogue regime," while the generals in the Pentagon and their allies in Congress call on him to build more military bases in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere and to keep the American Empire alive.

A Republican opposition that espoused a traditional conservative philosophy in both domestic and foreign policies could have been in a position to counterbalance the power of the liberal internationalists in the Obama administration and provide Obama and his more realistic foreign-policy advisors with the support they need to resist the interventionist impulse among Democrats. And imagine if the Town Hallers were protesting not only President Obama's healthcare reform but the attempt to secure the power of a corrupt and incompetent government in Kabul, and were demanding that Washington pursue a foreign policy that adheres to core U.S. national interests rather than the pipe dreams of the neoconser-

vatives and neoliberals. What a difference such a form of populist opposition could make in the foreign-policy debate in Washington!

I would urge my colleagues on the anti-interventionist right to abandon their dreams of the day when the Republican elites in Washington will be forced by their conservative followers in Peoria to return to their party's roots. Most Republicans and conservatives around the country support a more militant foreign-policy approach that would require many more military adventures, regime changes, and ideological crusades to destroy the "evil ones" and ensure that the rest of the world give in to U.S. dictates and adhere to American values. While the sentiments expressed in the town-hall meetings and other forums reflect genuine libertarian concerns about the growth of government under the Obama and—let's not forget!—Bush administrations, and perhaps even some worries about the long-term threats to traditional American cultural values, that kind of populism does not extend to foreign policy. Though the majority of activists you encounter at a Ron Paul event would like to see the federal government get out of their lives and refrain from confiscating their money and guns, most of them are not really interested in foreign-policy issues and are certainly not in a position to contest the reigning Republican and conservative imperialist stance that would likely dominate the policies of many Republican administrations to come. ◊

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Dissolving Britain

The Lisbon Treaty's Eurojustice

by Mary Ellen Synon

I have a picture pinned over my desk here in Brussels, a 1929 photograph — “obtained under great difficulty,” the caption says — of a man being executed by guillotine at 5 A.M. on an open street in France.

The title of the picture is “Legacy of the French Revolution.” I keep it because it is a modern link with an historic Continental horror. That is to say, it is a reminder, as I shift from my desk to the European Commission press briefings, of what it means to be “European.”

For me the title of the picture should be “Lest We Forget.” Lest we forget the culture from which the European Union springs. Lest we forget the history that has shaped Europe: the Terror, Napoleon’s butchery and his civil code, the violent European revolutions, the Continental taste for coercion, the Marxist distaste for the sovereignty of the nation-state.

You may think I go too far, but the more I watch the European Union — and I’ve been writing about it since 1979, when I won a fellowship to study the thing — the more I understand. This Continental coalition has a flawed and bloody pedigree. It is no place for Britain, the island nation whose governments and laws spring from Magna Carta, Common Law, and the 1689 Bill of Rights.

The European Union is centralized, intolerant, antinational, single-party, elitist, undemocratic, and illiberal. It is the essence of the Continental attitude concerning the way government should function, an attitude the same now as in Napoleon’s time. It is everything Britain under her own ancient constitution is not.

Yet to my anger and despair, the British are abandoning their political heritage and allowing themselves to be drawn into this.

Years of propaganda from Brussels — the Commission budget for propaganda this year alone is over \$3.5 billion, all disguised as “communications” — as well as a collective loss of nerve have led Britons to accept the E.U. line: “We are all Europeans now.” But Britons and Europeans are no more the same thing than Britons and Scandinavians are. We are not all Europeans now. We do not all share that shame.

Now, under a new treaty, the Lisbon Treaty, a single European state will be created. At this writing, the treaty is not yet law, but Brussels will not allow the people of Eu-

rope to refuse it. In 2005, the Dutch and the French voters rejected the text in referenda. Last year the Irish rejected it as well. So the E.U. elite simply rejected the votes. In Europe, the only vote that counts is the vote Brussels accepts. The Dutch, French, and Irish governments capitulated to this disgrace. Once the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, the European Union will become a “political entity,” a country called Europe with the power to act as a sovereign state.

One of my roles is to report for British readers on just how many more constitutional powers are being surrendered to Brussels. These stories — and those of jaw-dropping E.U. waste and corruption — once provoked fury. Now, when I come across yet another nugget of outrage, I increasingly wonder, “Why bother?” I know what Europe is destroying in Britain because I see it every day. What enrages me more is the somnolence of the British. It seems no loss of sovereignty, no obscene fleecing of the taxpayers to enrich the Brussels unelected elite, will make the British wake up and roar, “Stop!”

Britain now stands to lose everything to this new European state. Most disastrous will be the loss of the ancient British system of justice.

If you can cut your way through the deliberately difficult thickets of the Lisbon Treaty, you will see that it gives the European Union control even over procedure in British courts. Article 82 grants the European Parliament and the European Council (the meetings of heads of government) the power to set down rules for legal procedures in criminal cases: “They shall concern the mutual admissibility of evidence between Member States; the rights of individuals in criminal procedure; the rights of victims of crime; any other specific aspects of criminal procedure which the Council has identified in advance by a decision.”

Moreover, there is an institution called Eurojust, the E.U. “Judicial Cooperation Unit,” established in 2002. I could ask 10,000 people in England if they have ever heard of Eurojust, and the answer from each would be “No.” But under the Lisbon Treaty, Eurojust will gain the power to initiate investigations of British subjects and to order arrests.

The European Union presents Eurojust as a group of judges, one nominated by each member-state, whose job is to “enhance” — in the jargon of the Eurocrats, that means “take control of” — the effectiveness of the authorities in member-states when they are dealing with serious

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