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'A FRESH LOOK AT OUR CHANGING WORLD'

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Postcard from Dublin: Saying 'No' to the Lisbon Treaty

By JOHN FEFFER

The signs are everywhere, all over Ireland, but particularly here in Dublin. Some just say "Yes" or "No," but everyone knows what they mean. The newspapers are full of the debate. Both sides battle on the radio and television. For Ireland, it is déjà vu all over again.

In June 2008, Irish voters rejected the Lisbon Treaty—which strengthens the foreign policy and military institutions of the European Union—by a clear margin of 53 to 46 percent. Next month, on Oct. 2, Ireland will go to the polls a second time to vote on largely the same treaty.

European leaders and much of the Irish political elite are urging voters to vote yes to Lisbon. But the Irish anti-war movement begs to differ.

The Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA), a leader of the "No" camp, argues that the Lisbon Treaty is simply a shot in the arm for the European military-industrial complex. It undermines Irish neutrality and pushes Europe in the direction of empire, as either a junior partner to the United States or as an imperial force of its own.

In recent years, Europe has been building up its military capacities—within NATO and also as part of new pan-European institutions. Under the European Security and Defense Policy, the EU has conducted missions in more than 20 countries, and has ongoing military deployments in Bosnia, Macedonia, Chad, Congo, Guinea-Bissau, and Sudan.

In 2007, the EU formed rapid deployment battle-groups to have a standing capacity. The European Defense Agency, created in 2004, identifies gaps in military capabilities and promotes increased military expenditures. As major backers of this new agency, European military contractors are responsible for nearly one-third of global arms sales.

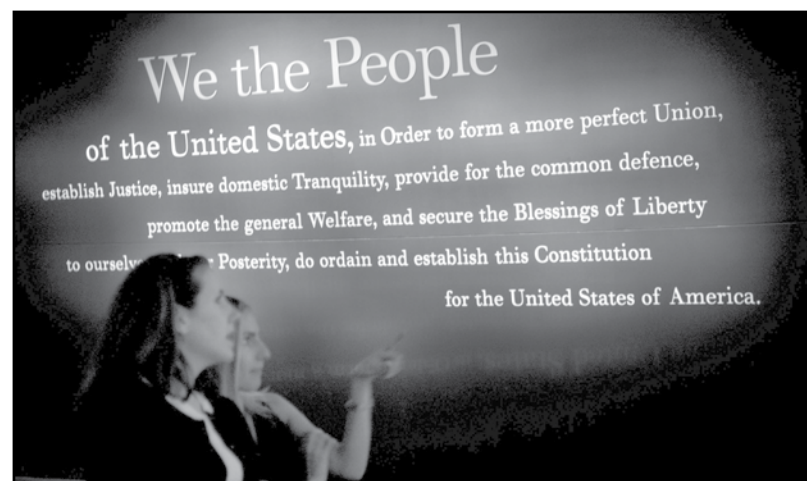
The Irish peace movement in particular is deeply troubled by these developments. Strongly supportive of the country's "triple lock" on overseas military deployments that requires government and parliamentary approval along with a U.N. mandate, the Irish peace movement is worried that the Lisbon Treaty will be a kind of backdoor entrance of Ireland into NATO.

Irish participation in U.N. peace-keeping is a good and necessary thing. But Irish involvement in military operations like the current war in Afghanistan is another matter entirely. Ireland already has a small contingent in Afghanistan. Thousands and thousands of U.S. soldiers go through Shannon Airport on their way to fight in Afghanistan, making the airport into an informal military base.

"An increased EU military role is bound to bring increased military costs upon Ireland and the Irish taxpayer—whether it be via the new military start-up fund, a GNP ratio, or the EU Union budget," writes PANA research officer Carol Fox. "This is of course quite apart from the obligations we have undertaken to 'progressively improve' our military capacity."

PANA is saying no to Lisbon. But it isn't saying no to Europe. As PANA chair Roger Cole argues, the Irish peace movement wants a new treaty that excludes Ireland from "involvement with or paying for the militarization of the EU."

John Feffer is co-director of Foreign Policy In Focus. www.fpi.org.



REPUBLIC: Two women walk past a painting of the beginning of the U.S. Constitution during a preview of the National Constitution Center, July 1, 2003, in Philadelphia. The ratification of the Constitution is considered the founding of the U.S. republic. PHOTO BY WILLIAM THOMAS CAIN/GETTY IMAGES

'A republic—if you can keep it'

By BELANNE PIBAL

Those were the words of Benjamin Franklin upon being asked what kind of government the new nation had after the vote was taken to approve the Constitution. Yet, there is very little mention in the mainstream media these days about our republic.

For decades, schools have taught that the United States is a democracy, so maybe the media and so many of the adults who believe the same thing can be forgiven. However, it is imperative that Americans, as a nation, know the difference between a democracy and a republic, if we wish to keep our republic.

In a democracy, the majority rules. The majority can vote each other out of house, home, and freedom. The majority can vote in Shariah law if they want. In a democracy, individuals have very little recourse if they want to go against the will of the majority.

That's one of the reasons our founding fathers declined to make this nation into a democracy. In the words of James Madison, "Democracies have been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and in general have been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their death."

How many times have Americans been bombarded by the notion of spreading freedom and democracy to other nations? In reality, we can only spread one, because freedom is incompatible with democracy. You can have one or the other, but not both. If we could spread the American form of government abroad, that would be spreading freedom, but democracy?—no.

So what is a republic? If democracy is so unstable and violent, what is a republic and why is it more desirable than a democracy? The Oxford American dictionary defines a republic as "a country in which the supreme power is held by the people or their elected representatives or by an elected or nominated president." That may sound the same as a democracy, but it is not.

In the case of America, it means that the people have approved a Constitution to define the powers of the government. This is one of the reasons why many Americans are upset about the president's speech to our children. The president is elected to serve America, not to turn our youngest Americans into government servants.

In the debate to approve the Constitution in Pennsylvania, one of the delegates, Mr. Wilson, stated that the supreme power of the uniquely American form of government resides in the people: "The truth is, that, in our governments, the supreme, absolute, and uncontrollable power remains in the people. As our constitutions are superior to our legislatures, so the people are superior to our constitutions."

"Indeed, the superiority, in this last instance, is much greater; for the people possess over our constitutions control in act, as well as right."

"The consequence is that the people may change the constitutions whenever and however they please. This is a right of which no positive institution can ever deprive them."

In a republic, we each have a personal responsibility to oversee and correct the government when it infringes on individual rights. In America, we are to do that by electing people of good character to office—regardless of their party affiliation.

And "We the People" retain the right to change those legislators and even the Constitution itself. The supreme power of our government resides with the people, but not in such a way that the majority can run roughshod over the rights of the individual.

That is the essential difference between a democracy and a republic. The question before Americans now is still, "Can we keep it?"

Belanne Pibal is a Liberty Features Syndicated Writer. www.libertyfeatures.com.

How Obama could win big on health care

By PETER MORICI

Health care reform is in trouble, but with adjustments, President Obama could win big.

With several bills moving through the House, the elements of his preferred approach are clear:

Universal coverage and community ratings—everyone plays and pays what they can, and insurers can't charge higher premiums for pre-existing conditions or cancel policyholders.

Among the 46 million uninsured, many buy policies only when they anticipate major expenses, making coverage unaffordable for others seeking permanent insurance. Those reforms would fix that.

A public plan—an assured option for those without private insurance and more competition for private insurers.

Continued reliance on employer-based insurance—an 8 percent payroll tax on businesses that don't offer health insurance to employees. And subsidies for those who cannot fully afford premiums.

Together, those would get almost everyone insured, but many Americans fear loss of their private health plans and a universal system would treat them worse and be more costly.

Employers could calculate paying the 8 percent tax cheaper than their current plans, drop coverage, and

push employees into the public plan. Having endured long waits and arbitrary treatment at agencies like the Veterans Administration and IRS, many Americans simply don't want government agencies determining what treatments they receive or how fast those are delivered.

Health care costs are 50 percent higher in the United States than in Canada or Europe. The system is handicapped by huge malpractice costs, higher drug prices and physician fees, hospital and insurance bureaucracies, and lavish executive salaries that foreign systems don't carry.

Obama has negotiated savings with drug companies and other service providers, but those are hardly enough to bring U.S. costs in line. By further subsidizing health care, the president's program would drive up demand and prices.

Congressional Republicans and Blue Dog Democrats generally oppose a public option, and several have suggested establishing private nonprofits. However, those could be just as menacing if other elements of the Obama approach are not fixed.

Raise the employer payroll tax from 8 percent to the true cost of providing a decent plan, reducing incentives for businesses to push employees elsewhere.

Truly empower nonprofits to lower costs. Require pharmaceutical companies to charge them no more for drugs

than is paid in Canada, and let non-profits enroll anyone who agrees to waive malpractice suits. Complaints could be resolved, through non-judicial procedures, for true damages but no punitive awards.

Require employers to offer non-profit plans among the choices available to employees.

Then most Americans could choose to stay in a system permitting them to sue doctors, pay exorbitant drug prices, and enrich lawyers and executives. However, competition from the nonprofits would drive insurance giants like Humana to develop a renewed interest in torts reform, negotiating down drug prices, streamlining bureaucracies and hospital staffing, instead of just charging higher premiums.

Nonprofits, no doubt, would look a lot like providers in Canada and Europe, but the private insurance industry would morph into something profoundly more competitive.

Republicans, Blue Dogs like competition—they could buy in.

By taking on the malpractice lawyers, drug companies, and insurers, Obama could become the president he promised to be—and win big.

Peter Morici is a professor at the *Smith School of Business, University of Maryland School, and the former chief economist at the U.S. International Trade Commission.*

QUITTING THE CCP



60,623,386

Chinese people have announced their intentions to quit the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliated organizations on a special Web site established by The Epoch Times. Many others, unable to break through the Chinese Internet blockade, have posted their withdrawal statements on poles or buildings. Others have written them on Chinese currency. Read recent statements of Chinese quitting the Party, the latest news on the "Nine Commentaries," and more at <http://www.NineCommentaries.com>

The 'Nine Commentaries' is the book that is disintegrating the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and changing China.

This award-winning Epoch Times editorial series discloses the true history and nature of the CCP. Now it is serialized here.

Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party

Commentary Eight (cont.)

On how the Chinese Communist Party is an evil cult

6. Monopolization of the economy
The sole purpose of establishing the CCP was to seize power by armed force and then to generate a system of state ownership in which the state holds monopolies in the planned economy. The CCP's wild ambition far surpasses that of the ordinary evil cults who simply accumulate money.

In a country of socialist public ownership ruled by the Communist Party, Party organizations that hold great power (that is, the Party committees and branches at various levels) are imposed upon or possess the normal state infrastructure. The possessing Party organizations control state machinery and draw funds directly from the budgets of the governments at different levels. Like a vampire, the CCP has sucked a huge amount of

wealth from the nation.

II. The damage the CCP cult has wrought

When incidents like Aum Shinri Kyo's (Supreme Truth) killing people with sarin nerve gas, the Solar Temple's members ascending to heaven by suicide, or the mass suicide of over 900 followers of Jim Jones's People's Temple are mentioned, everyone trembles with fear and outrage. However, the CCP is an evil cult that commits crimes a thousand times worse, harming countless lives. This is because the CCP possesses the following unique features that ordinary cults lack.

THE EVIL CULT BECAME A STATE RELIGION

In most countries, if you do not follow a religion, you can still enjoy a happy life without reading the literature or listening to the principles of that religion. It is impossible to live in mainland China without a constant exposure to the doctrines and propaganda of the CCP cult, as the CCP, upon seizing power, turned its evil cult into a state religion.

The CCP begins to instill its politi-

cal preaching as early as kindergarten and elementary school. One cannot receive higher education or promotion to higher office without passing the Political Examination.

None of the questions in the Political Examination allow independent thinking. Those taking the exams are required to memorize the standard answers provided by the CCP in order to pass. The unfortunate Chinese people are forced to repeat the CCP's preaching even when they are young, brainwashing themselves over and over again.

When a cadre is promoted to a higher office in the government, even though he is a member of the CCP, he has to attend the Party School. He won't be promoted until he has met the requirements for graduation from the Party School.

In China, where the Communist Party is the state religion, groups with different opinions are not allowed to exist. Even the "democratic parties," which are merely set up by the CCP as a political screen, and the reformed Three-Self Church (self-administration, self-support, and self-propagation) must formally acknowledge the leadership of the CCP.

Loyalty to the CCP is the first priority before entertaining any other beliefs, according to the very cultish logic of the CCP.

SOCIAL CONTROLS GO TO EXTREMES

This evil cult was able to become a state religion because the CCP had complete social control and deprived individuals of freedom. This kind of control is unprecedented. The CCP had deprived people of private property, which is one foundation of freedom.

Before the 1980s, people in urban areas could only earn a living by working in Party-controlled enterprises. Farmers in the rural areas had to live on the farmland belonging to the communes of the Party. Nobody could escape the CCP's control.

In a socialist country like China, the Communist Party organizations are ubiquitous—from the central government to the most grass-roots levels of society, including villages and neighborhoods. Through the Party committees and branches at all levels, the CCP maintains an absolute control over society.

Such strict control completely crushes individual freedom—the freedom of movement (residence reg-

istration system), freedom of speech (500,000 rightists were persecuted by the CCP because they exercised free speech), freedom of thought (Lin Zhao' and Zhang Zhixin" were executed for having doubts about the CCP), and freedom to obtain information (it is illegal to read forbidden books or listen to "enemies' radio stations"; Internet browsing is monitored as well).

Lin Zhao, a Beijing University student majoring in journalism, was classified as a "rightist" in 1957 for her independent thinking and outspoken criticism of the communist movement. She was charged with conspiracy to overthrow the people's democratic dictatorship and arrested in 1960. In 1962, she was sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment. She was killed by the CCP on April 29, 1968, as a counter-revolutionary.

Zhang Zhixin was an intellectual who was tortured to death by the CCP during the Cultural Revolution for criticizing Mao's failure in the Great Leap Forward and for being outspoken in telling the truth. Many times prison guards stripped off her clothes, handcuffed her hands behind her back, and threw her into male prison cells to let male prisoners gang rape her. Eventually she went insane. The prison feared she would shout slogans in protest when being executed, so they cut a hole in her trachea before her execution.

Letters to the Editor



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