England, an epitaph

On Great Britain’s accession to the Treaty of Lisbon.

Books like Better Never to Have Been and folks like Toni Vernelli, Ed, and their fellow vegan, eco-conscious, non-fossil-fuel-burning, sprout-munching Greens are as risible as they are pathetic. What makes them more than a lamentable aberration is the way they echo and reinforce other instances of Western renunciation. Item: Last month, Gordon Brown’s government joined twenty-six other European countries in signing the Lisbon Treaty, i.e., the cynical reprise of the preposterous European Constitution that was roundly defeated by voters last year. It was one of Prime Minister Brown’s campaign promises to hold a referendum on the matter. What happened? Bureaucratic hauteur happened. It was quite clear that the voters in Britain would have rejected the Lisbon Treaty. Therefore, the voters must be ignored.

It is a sad moment for Britain. The lumbering machinery of the state has ridden roughshod over the people. And most of them no longer seem to mind. The journalist Rosemary Righter got it exactly right in a tart leader for The Times:

“History will remember this day as a day when new paths of hope were opened to the European ideal.” Thus spoke José Sócrates, the Prime Minister of Portugal, at the signing ceremony of the European treaty that dares not speak its true name.

Pass the hemlock. And the sick bag. The “European ideal” consists, it is now evident, of imposing on voters far-reaching changes to the way they are to be governed, without allowing them a look-in, or a voice. The “path of hope” beckons only to Europe’s most messianic federalists: it consists of a treaty clause that says that governments may in future cede powers to Brussels without consulting their parliaments, let alone their cussed voters.

History will indeed have a word for this: perfidy. Every single one of the 27 signatories of the Lisbon treaty is guilty of a breach of the democratic compact, monumental in its arrogance. Every one of them knows that, shorn of a few preambular paragraphs, chopped up and reassembled in a deliberately unreadable jumble of “amendments,” it resurrects the EU
We’ve always had a soft spot for the patriotic song “Rule, Britannia!” partly because of the catchy tune, partly because of the bracing atmosphere of freedom the song presupposes and evokes:

Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves!
Britons never, never, never shall be slaves!

Written in 1740 to commemorate King Alfred’s victory over the Vikings. The song has become synonymous with British derring-do. Runnymede. The defeat of the Spanish Armada. The defeat of Napoleon. The defiance and defeat of Hitler. The tradition of common law, individual liberty, and economic freedom … Say goodbye to all that. To date, the response to Gordon Brown’s usurpation of Britain’s sovereignty has been confined to a few journalistic sallies. Across that green and pleasant land, supine acquiescence is the order of the day. With only paltry exceptions, we see the same thing on the Continent. The handover of freedom and self-government to a smug, self-perpetuating, unelected bureaucratic elite is virtually complete, awaiting only ratification by the parliaments of the member countries.

Will there be an eleventh-hour burst of sanity and self-assertion? We hope so. We like to think so. But we are not banking on it. It’s no longer “Rule, Britannia!,” alas, but “Ruled Britannia!”

Ruled Britannia! Britannia ruled by knaves!
Britons henceforth, henceforth, henceforth shall be slaves!

Meanwhile, we note that Muhammad is now the most popular boy’s name in the United Kingdom. We doubt that Professor Benatar’s book or Toni Vernelli’s gospel of barrenness are popular in the madrassas.

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