

Norwegian sanctimony, global folly on Nobel

The Norwegian Nobel Committee looked in the mirror, saw the president of the United States, and awarded the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize to Barack Obama. One is tempted to vary Rainer Maria Rilke ("Love consists in this, that two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other") and suggest that this was the meeting of two narcissisms. But that, as Richard Nixon might have said, would be wrong. The Nobel Committee is sufficiently enamored of its own moral superiority to ascribe its self-regarding virtues to any nominee it wishes.

The astonishing announcement of the Peace Prize was a matter of the Scandinavian left projecting what it regards as its superior political morality onto the man who promised "change" and "hope" without specifying the content of either. Still, it seems reasonably clear what the Norwegians imagine that content to be.

The world of the Norwegian Nobel Committee is one in which conflict is born from misunderstanding rather than from a clash of interests; thus diplomacy is a therapeutic exercise in which soothing words make for peace. The notion that "peace" might have something to do with creating structures by which conflict is resolved politically - which informed the award of the Peace Prize to George C. Marshall, Nelson Mandela and Frederik Willem de Klerk - is missing from the Norwegians' view of the world these days.

Once upon a time, the Norwegian Nobel Committee also understood the linkage between human rights and peace; hence the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to heroes like Andrei Sakharov and Lech Walesa. Did the Norwegians know that Obama stiffed their 1989 awardee, the Dalai Lama, declining to receive the nonviolent Tibetan leader at the White House for fear of aggravating the Chinese government?

The Norwegian Nobel Committee imagines that the president shares its worldview and wanted to encourage Obama on his chosen path. But what if that path turns out to be a snare and a delusion, because those to be appeased are unappeasable?

Suppose the path the Nobel Committee wishes the president to follow leads to a revival of al-Qaeda terrorism and a nuclear-armed Iran? What if diplomacy-as-therapy leads, not only to a nuclear-armed Iran, but to a nuclear-armed Egypt, Saudi Arabia or Gulf states – and a devastating nuclear war in the Middle East?

The president has a golden opportunity to do something about this dangerous and willful Euro-naivete when he accepts the Nobel in December. He could accept it in the name of a United States committed to global leadership of the sort that saved Europe from its follies three times in the 20th century. He could use the global bully pulpit to tell President Ahmadinejad and the mullahs of Iran that their vicious regime will not be permitted to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. He could call on the Chinese government to recognize that there is no peace without human rights.

If he does, the Norwegian Nobel Committee may well faint en masse; but the president will have taken a giant step toward earning his Peace Prize.

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