



A NOBEL PRIZE FOR A NOBLE MAN

Sándor Isg Márai

Alfred Nobel's last will and testament highlights the spirit of the Nobel Peace Prize. The Prize is to be awarded "to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses."

October 2009 has been good for Americans. Unfortunately, it will be years before history confirms this fact. In October, the Norwegian Nobel Committee acknowledged a new perception of America. This new perception was forged by the persona, actions, words and spirit of President Barack Obama. The acknowledgment gave a nod to America's new role in the world by awarding our president the Nobel Peace Prize.

The global community sensed change was in the air with the election of President Obama. They were not disappointed. The United States has moved from an era of irresponsible and unjustified Conservative and Republican "bully" policies toward an era of dialogue, global respect and peace. We live in a new day: The Obama Era.

Congratulations, President Obama!

President Obama's Nobel Peace Prize is a pleasant surprise for those who love this country. Through the Prize, the global community begins to acknowledge the change from a hostile America to a constructive America. Many of us fail to understand or accept it at the present time. However, history will vindicate the award. President Obama is worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize. His persona, character traits, intellect and ability to inspire others for good beyond the capacity of even extraordinary people are all excellent reasons for awarding him the Nobel Peace Prize.

I'll admit there is surprise on both sides of the aisle, Left and Right, Progressives and Conservatives. By surprise, I don't mean pleasantly surprised as I am, but merely "surprised" and at times with less than positive things to say about our president. Progressives surprised in this manner, i.e. with neutral or less than positive things to say, have simply underestimated and failed to recognize the importance of the Obama persona to lasting global prosperity and peace.

What about Conservatives? Unfortunately, we live in a country with a multitude of racially and politically myopic citizens. When terror strikes our shores and our political leaders inflict their scare tactics on the citizenry, we pretend to come together, but in the end everything returns to the way it was. The Bush administration has been the clearest example of this. There are "haters" among us. These haters place their own biases, as well as their racial and political orientations, over the well-being of our nation. They would rather see our president fail because he's a Democrat and/or African-American than see him succeed and

concede that he has embarked America on the right path. It's a path that the global community has begun to appreciate.

Underlying the pleasant surprise of President Obama's Nobel Peace Prize are the following facts. First, President Obama was nominated according to the Committee's rules. Second, the Committee's policy was followed as his name progressed to the short list. Third, the Committee voted without irregularities and President Obama's selection was legitimate. Finally, after two terms of the deceptively aggressive policies of the Bush administration leaving the world in disarray, President Obama's policies, actions, words and spirit have reassured the world that America is once again a partner in the global community and has renewed steps toward a more lasting world peace. This alone was sufficient justification for awarding the prize if the Committee deemed it appropriate, and it did.

Nine months into office, President Barack Obama has begun to heal the eight years of national and global devastation left by the Bush administration. The Committee was correct in highlighting President Obama's "extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy." In addition, the Committee attached "special importance to Obama's vision of and work for a world without nuclear weapons." In the words of Nobel Committee Chairman Thorbjørn Jagland, "Only very rarely has a person to the same extent as Obama captured the world's attention and given its people hope for a better future." He was correct in presenting this undeniable fact. Only someone completely alienated from the information exchanged on the Web, television and newspapers or whose sole source of news is Fox News would attempt to refute this reality. Yes, it is true that there are others deserving the award, too, but this does not deny the Committee's appropriate selection of President Obama as the winner of this year's Nobel Peace Prize. Jagland added, "It's important for the Committee to recognize people who are struggling and idealistic, but we cannot do that every year. We must from time to time go into the realm of realpolitik. It is always a mix of idealism and realpolitik that can change the world." President Obama has changed the world. The global community has started to acknowledge this positive change. I hope those who claim to love America will as well.

I'm certain Alfred Nobel would look toward President Obama and say he has done extraordinary work for fraternity between nations and for the holding and promotion of peace.

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THE NOBEL "HOPE FOR" PEACE PRIZE

By Rana Odeh



In his will, Alfred Nobel dedicated a large portion of his fortune to "the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses."

"The Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded for work in a wide range of fields including advocacy of human rights, mediation of international conflicts, and arms control." The Nobel Foundation

Throughout the history of the Nobel Peace Prize, there have been two consistent qualifications; accomplishment, and time spent working for peace - until 2009. President Barack Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples." What does that mean? Having the potential to accomplish something was not found anywhere in the statutes of the Nobel Foundation. Obama winning the respectable Nobel Peace Prize is especially surprising for three reasons: he has not yet accomplished anything, nobody is denying that he has not accomplished anything, nor has he dedicated enough time toward accomplishing any peace.

As we have seen in very recent history, people cannot wait for a reason to criticize their president. But are they just trying to point fingers at Obama for winning the Nobel Peace Prize, or is there a valid reason that the award has everybody raising questions and concerns? Well, let us take a look at President Obama's extensive list of accomplishments during his "oh so long" time in office: 1) Obama suddenly backed out of solving the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. 2) He borrowed soldiers from Iraq to send to a war in Afghanistan...I'm not quite sure Mr. Nobel would approve of the Committee's decision.

Along with the prestigious title of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Obama was awarded \$1.4 million to help further his accomplishments, or rather potential. The Nobel Foundation has already decided that Obama is worthy of the award, but it is surprising that he was the only laureate this year, considering it is not uncommon to share the award with multiple laureates. It is also hard to believe that nobody else deserved the award in 2009, or was in need of the financial remuneration to support his/her work for peace.

If no one has made any accomplishments toward peace, then the award should not have been given this year. The statutes of the Nobel Foundation says, "If none of the works under consideration is found to be of the

importance indicated in the first paragraph, the prize money shall be reserved until the following year. If, even then, the prize cannot be awarded, the amount shall be added to the Foundation's restricted funds." Just a quick reminder of what the first paragraph indicates; "the person who shall have done the most or the best work..." should receive the award. The Nobel Foundation found nobody worthy of the award in 1914-1918, 1923, 1924, 1928, 1932, 1939-1943, 1948, 1955-1956, 1966-1967 and 1972. During World War I and World War II, the Nobel Foundation withheld the award and funds. Why, for the first time, did they give the award to somebody who has yet to prove himself? Is the world so desperate or so much in denial that we are currently living in an era in which nobody is advancing towards world peace? What many people may not realize is that President Obama took office only two weeks before the nomination deadline of Feb. 1. It is true that Obama brought hope to many people across the globe during his campaign and with his election, but he barely had the chance to warm his seat in the Oval Office before he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Are we missing something here?

Norwegian Nobel Committee Chairman Thorbjørn Jagland defended the jury's decision by pointing out Obama's efforts to heal the divide between the West and the Muslim world and efforts to scale down a Bush-era proposal for an anti-missile shield in Europe. Although every presidential candidate makes promises and brings hope to his/her target audience, we always find that promises are broken. This time, out of desperation, the Nobel Committee forgot the broken promises of all presidents, and ignored the lack of work Obama has done.

"All these things have contributed to -- I wouldn't say a safer world -- but a world with less tension," Jagland said in an extremely emotion based and opinion based defense. There is no evidence for what President Obama has done in the past year, and the jury cannot prove that Obama has created any less tension, just because they have been sleeping better since he took office. It is a bit disconcerting that Obama was deemed most qualified for the Peace Prize out of 172 individual and 33-organization nominees. I certainly hope Obama follows through with actions and proves that the Nobel Committee has made a good choice for the 2009 award.

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