

A Peace Prize for a War President

Posted by Mark Knoller



(AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

his acceptance speech to address that irony.

It raises the question of whether the Nobel judges would have wanted to bestow one of the most highly-coveted awards on the planet on an American president newly-engaged in an expansion of military might in a conflict now in its eighth year.

The judges said they selected Mr. Obama to honor "his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples."

But asked specifically if Mr. Obama will be accepting the Nobel Peace Prize as a war president, spokesman Gibbs was unambiguous. "Exactly," he stated bluntly. And he will mention Afghanistan in his acceptance speech.

It was easier for Mr. Obama's two predecessors who won the Peace Prize. They too, waged war, but were honored after-the-fact for their efforts to establish peace:

- In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt was honored for what the Nobel Committee termed his "happy role in bringing to an end the bloody war recently waged between two of the world's great powers, Japan and Russia."
- And in 1919, President Woodrow Wilson was honored for helping to end World War I (before such wars had

There'll be no effort by Barack Obama to disguise or obscure the fact that he's a war president when he accepts the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo on Thursday.

The ceremony takes place ten days after he announced plans to escalate the U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan by deploying another 30,000 American troops there.

Even the White House regards it as an odd "juxtaposition" and spokesman Robert Gibbs says the president will use

to be numbered) and his enumeration of "Fourteen Points," which the Nobel Committee said brought "a fundamental law of humanity into present-day international politics."

So there was no awkward juxtaposition for either of those two presidents to address in accepting their prizes.

An ailing Wilson could not appear in person to receive the honor, but in a telegram to the presentation ceremony, he spoke of the "vastness of the work still called for" in pursuit of the cause of peace.

He lamented that "mankind has not yet been rid of the unspeakable horror of war." But he said he is convinced "that our generation has, despite its wounds, made notable progress."

Ten years earlier, Roosevelt delivered the Nobel Lecture in person at the National Theater in Oslo, before an audience of more than 2,000.

"Peace is generally good in itself," said Roosevelt, "but it is never the highest good unless it comes as the handmaid of righteousness."

He said peace can even become "a very evil thing if it serves merely as a mask for cowardice and sloth, or and an instrument to further the ends of despotism or anarchy."

Those words might presage what Mr. Obama will say in accepting his Peace Prize even as he seeks to justify an escalation of the conflict in Afghanistan.

"No man," Roosevelt said, "is worth calling a man who will not fight rather than submit to infamy or see those that are dear to him suffer wrong."

His words 99 years ago could lend themselves to Mr. Obama's objectives in Afghanistan as he stated them last Tuesday evening at West Point.

"If I did not think that the security of the United States and the safety of the American people were at stake in Afghanistan," said Mr. Obama. "I would gladly order every single one of our troops home tomorrow."

He can be expected to argue that the U.S. is escalating in Afghanistan in the cause of peace.



(CBS)

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