

An ignoble peace prize

Nitroglycerine is a superb explosive. But it's also highly volatile. Shake the oily liquid too much and — bang!

In 1866, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel patented a method of stabilizing nitro by soaking it into an inert base. The resulting product was dynamite, an all-time best-seller. Other Nobel inventions created a whole new range of military explosives that made artillery the king of battle.

Nobel became extremely rich and very guilt-ridden. He correctly foresaw that his inventions would help cause the death of millions in World War I. To salve his troubled conscience, he created a series of prizes, chief among which was the renowned Nobel Peace Prize.

Originally, the Peace Prize went to people who had made genuine, identifiable contributions to world peace. But in recent years the Nobel Peace Prize has become a highly politicized instrument of Sweden's leftist foreign policy.

This week's Peace Prize award to Costa Rican President Oscar Arias is a perfect case in point. Arias put together a Central American peace plan calling for a halt to all fighting in the region, implementation of vaguely defined democratic procedures and an end to U.S. and Honduran aid to Nicaragua's anti-communist Contras.

The plan does not call for the USSR and Cuba to halt their extensive aid to Nicaragua or for the withdrawal of their troops and advisers, now estimated to number 12,000. The plan's real objective is to emasculate the Contras and deter the threat of U.S. intervention to throw out Nicaragua's Marxist regime. And also — somehow — to convince the Sandinistas not to turn Nicaragua into a base for the Warsaw Pact.

It's far too soon to tell if the Arias Plan will have any lasting success. So far its principle effect has been to give the timid Democrats in Congress an excuse for cutting off aid to the Contras.

The Nobel Prize awarded to Arias is clearly designed to encourage foes of the Contras. Congressmen are already citing the award as the perfect reason for abandoning the Contras. Opposing someone who has won the Nobel Peace Prize seems like attacking motherhood.

Peace Prizes are usually given after peace has been reached, not before. By rushing out this award even before preliminary negotiations have started, the Swedish committee's haste is yet further proof of the well-known zeal the Swedes have for Nicaragua's Marxist junta.

Punch



"Of course I'm here. Where else would I be?"

ERIC MARGOLIS



Last year's prize for South Africa's Bishop Desmond Tutu, a man loved by the media but without any following in his own nation, was another political award by Sweden.

The Swedes, who provide cash that buys East Bloc arms for the African National Congress guerrillas, claim neutrality but have funded all sorts of leftist Third World movements for years.

Also worth noting is that one of the key people on the award committee is a bigwig in the World Council of Churches, an organization that is not only far to the ideological left but heavily infiltrated by Soviet agents of influence.

So deeply discount all the nonsense, blather and platitudes you hear about the Nobel Peace Prize. It has become one of the most empty and fatuous of modern awards, lately only a cut above those prizes handed out by Soviet front organizations like the World Peace Council. Mind you, the Peace Prize is a great gimmick for Sweden: Without the award, Sweden would have absolutely no influence whatever in the rest of the world.

Why more nations don't do the same mystifies me. Canada's left, which so much wants to be like Sweden, could create the Pierre E. Trudeau Peace Award and hand it out with a big cash award (U.S. dollars only, please) to such enlightened democrats and peacemakers as Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe or Ethiopia's Col. Mengistu.

There is, however, some fairness in life. Pious, oh-so-moral Sweden, which has been busy lecturing the rest of the world on morality while supplying Marxist guerrillas and Vietnam with aid, is now undergoing a welcome scandal.

Swedish law forbids exporting arms to any zones of "unrest." It turns out the more-peaceful-than-thou Swedes have been secretly shipping their excellent arms to such forbidden places as Iran and Iraq.

The pious Swedes also seem to have paid \$74 million or more in bribes to Indian politicians and officials in order to land a huge artillery contract, the nation's largest-ever arms deal.

And which company did these naughty things? Why Bofors, one of the thriving corporate descendants of Alfred Nobel's arms and explosives empire.

With one lily white hand, Sweden presents the Nobel Peace Prize with the intent of scuppering the Contras. With the other less-clean hand, Sweden violates its own laws and smuggles arms, via Singapore, to the warring Persian Gulf nations.

Such hypocrisy makes our own little would-be Swedes in Ottawa seem pikers by comparison.

As for the Nobel Peace Prize, I suggest the Nobel committee roll it up and blow it out of one of Bofors' 155 mm guns.