

What Obama's Trip to Europe Revealed

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Declaring something a success doesn't necessarily make it so. We learned this at the Bush-led G-20 summit only four months ago, when global leaders were expected to do something far-reaching in response to the world-wide economic crisis, instead of chatting about it. When nothing came of the meeting, we were told that the summit "succeeded" because it "laid the groundwork" for the next G-20 gathering, recently led by Obama.

The four months between G-20 summits was one of rising massive unemployment and social misery for millions of people, creating an urgency that was unmet by the world leaders in London.

The truly pitiful joint-response of the summit sparked zero inspiration in the peoples of the world. The corporate controlled media, however, hailed the meeting a success of epic proportion and awarded Obama the title of Messiah.

What were these successes? The triumph most blasted through the media was the one trillion dollars of stimulus spending agreed upon, to be funneled through the globally-hated International Monetary Fund (IMF).

It needn't be said that one trillion dollars, on a global scale, is peanuts. It should be mentioned, however, that much of this money was committed prior to the summit, and inserted into the G-20 numbers to beef up public relations.

Another G-20 "triumph" paraded through the media was a \$100 billion dollars committed to the equally-hated World Bank, supposedly to help the poorest of the poor countries. This benevolent act — itself peanuts— was immediately contradicted by the Wall Street Journal:

"...anyone who has followed our editorials on the corrupt uses to which the bank's [World Bank] existing \$30 billion annual budget is routinely put can easily imagine that much of the G-20's financial benevolence will never reach its intended targets in poor countries."

And then you have the hot topic issue of financial regulation, the complete absence of which allowed the illusory financial boom to go on for years, thus intensifying the current recession. Regulation was a central demand of the European countries, who are seeking curbs on the U.S. financial institutions that out-competed European companies, while invading their economies with "top-rated" stocks and bonds that were actually worthless.

But a special hobby of Obama's has been to prop up these institutions, as he continues to give billions of dollars of U.S. taxpayer money to U.S. mega-banks and insurance companies. This dynamic shaped Obama's opinion on the G-20 debate: he agreed only to a vague and toothless international regulatory committee to be set up in the unforeseen future.

The New York Times commented: “Mr. Obama and his team seem more committed to domestic regulation than their predecessors — but fiercely resistant to the idea of a global regulator.”

And the Wall Street Journal concluded that the G-20’s “commitments will have to be implemented not by a single unit called the G-20 but by 20 or more separate, sovereign nations.”

Ultimately, this means that each country will police itself, and depending on the shifting and conflicting interests of each country’s corporate elite, little is likely ever to be agreed on in a coordinated fashion (the conflicting countries within the E.U. have yet to agree to a common set of regulatory standards).

In this light the G-20’s statement against economic protectionism is laughable, especially since the same statement was made at the last G-20 summit, and immediately afterwards nearly every country engaged in protectionist policy to one degree or another.

To avoid future protectionism, a meeting of the World Trade Organization was supposed to be set up during the G-20 to discuss the equally disastrous concept of “free trade.” Apparently, they thought that such a meeting would be as pointless as the one they were currently attending. The utter silence on the matter is telling.

All the frivolous talk of “global unity” was shelved when the G-20 summit ended, and the NATO summit began immediately afterwards. NATO was originally created as a U.S.-European military alliance to combat the influence of “communist” Russia and China, and is used presently to combat the rising influence of capitalist Russia and China, so as to maintain the international status-quo, with the U.S. and Europe on top.

The NATO-led war in Afghanistan — now spilling over into Pakistan — has revved up world tensions to a boiling point. Russia and China both correctly view the war as a threat to their sphere of influence, and see the new front opening up in Pakistan as proof of their theory.

In lieu of this, it was especially important for Obama to get further European support for his broadening wars. But the silence of the Europeans was deafening; only 5,000 troops were committed for Obama’s war. France’s President committed zero.

After hearing Obama’s plans for Afghanistan and Pakistan, many Europeans were stunned. This was not the change they expected. One French journalist reportedly responded, “We have all been surprised. He is so ... American!”

Jennifer Loven, a White House Correspondent, explains why: “In real life, neither U.S. foreign policy nor that of other nations tends to change all that much when a government shifts to a different party.”

This is indeed true for the corporate-controlled U.S. two-party system, whose main interests are: securing markets for corporations so their products can be sold; securing raw materials for corporations to cheaply produce commodities; and securing “spheres of influence” so that the banks and corporations of other countries will be excluded.

Obama’s failure to secure more NATO troops — and adequate funds from the G-20 — shows just how weak the U.S. has grown internationally. After World War II the

U.S. needed only to snap its fingers and the rest of the world would fall into line. Now, however, these countries have mature economies of their own, led by giant corporations that compete with those of the U.S.

Ultimately, the global recession is having barbarous consequences all over the world and the problem is not being seriously addressed. The Global Monitoring Report from Unesco estimates that, in Africa starvation will endanger the lives of tens of millions of people. In the U.S. 1 in 9 people now need government assistance for food.

The G-20 correctly stated in their joint communiqué that “A global crisis requires a global solution.” The G-20, however, is unable to put forth such a solution. In charge of nearly every capitalist economy of the G-20 lies a head of state hated by its people, as it pursues policies that help the owners of banks and corporations, but not those who work for them. This public disdain was displayed during the NATO protests, where \$150 million dollars was spent to protect the alliance government representatives from the native population.

An Op-Ed in The New York Times recently pointed out:

“Mr. Obama is the only popular politician left in the world. He would win an election in any one of the G-20 countries, and his fellow world leaders will do anything to take home a touch of that reflected popularity” (4/5/09).

This is only half true. Out of the countries fiercely clinging to the market economy (capitalism), Obama is indeed the ONLY popular President. But this popularity is based on lingering illusions and not concrete results. The only truly popular presidents in the world are from the Latin American countries that have begun to subordinate capitalistic principles (competition) to socialistic ones (cooperation).

In doing so, the above-stated interests of corporations that lead to international stalemates and conflicts can be subdued, and policies that benefit ordinary people and induce cooperation can be pursued instead. Only when society’s resources are run for the benefit of everyone, and not the profit of small groups of very rich people, will international cooperation be possible. Obama’s trip to Europe merely highlighted this fact.

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