

Obama Not Welcomed In Germany, Ireland

June 19—President Obama's PR visit to Europe for the G8 Summit failed to boost his standing among the allies, or his sagging popularity at home. Not only did he, and his doppelgänger, British Prime Minister David Cameron, fail to force Russian President Vladimir Putin to change his policy on Syria, but Obama faced voluble hostility in both Germany and Ireland, including some in surprising places.

In Berlin, Obama's defense of his NSA spying on millions of Americans provoked a mild scolding from Chancellor Angela Merkel, who suggested that the U.S. take a more "balanced approach in its use of "modern technologies." While most German media slavishly applauded Obama, some were less impressed. The *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung* wrote, "[T]here is disappointment at Obama personally," while the widely read weekly *Der Spiegel* lashed out against him under the headline "Obama's Soft Totalitarianism: Europe Must Protect Itself from America."

Chief editor Jakob Augstein wrote: "Those who believed that drone attacks in Pakistan or the camp at Guantanamo were merely regrettable events at the end of the world should stop to reflect. Those who still believed that the torture at Abu Ghraib or the waterboarding in CIA prisons had nothing to do with them, are now changing their views. Those who thought that we are on the good side and that it is others who are stomping all over human rights are now opening their eyes. A regime is ruling in the United States today that acts in totalitarian ways when it comes to its claim to total control. Soft totalitarianism is still totalitarianism."

Many Germans remember President Kennedy's visit to a divided Berlin in June 1963, when his words, "*Ich bin ein Berliner*," inspired the German people, and won their hearts. Obama's appearance in the same city 50 years later prompted one observer to suggest that the current U.S. President might have

said, "*Ich bin ein Bail-iner*."

In Northern Ireland, where the G8 meeting took place June 17-18 at the posh Lough Erne golf resort, enthusiasm among the usually pro-American Irish was at a low point, despite an intense public relations campaign by the entire Obama family.

Republic of Ireland parliamentarian Clare Daly accused Prime Minister Enda Kenny of showcasing Ireland as "as a nation of pimps, prostituting ourselves in return for a pat on the head."

She described Obama as a "war criminal," having "just announced his decision to supply arms to the Syrian opposition, including the jihadists, fuelling the destabilization of that region, continuing to undermine secularism and knock back conditions for women."

Daly said: "This is the man who is in essence stalling the Geneva peace talks by trying to broker enhanced leverage for the Syrian opposition by giving them arms. . . . This is the man who has facilitated a 200% increase in the use of drones which have killed thousands of people, including hundreds of children."

Summing up the Irish sentiment was an "Open Letter to Barack Obama" in the Belfast *Irish News* by columnist Patrick Murphy, who began: "WELCOME to Belfast. Forgive us if we are not exactly overwhelmed by your arrival."

SPIEGEL ONLINE INTERNATIONAL Sign In / Register

Front Page World Europe Germany Business Zeitgeist Newsletter

English Also in World > China > France > Germany > India > Italy > Japan > Korea > Middle East > Russia > U.S. > UK > Americas > Other > Features

Obama's Soft Totalitarianism: Europe Must Protect Itself from America

A Commentary by Jakob Augstein

People around the world were shocked to learn of the extent of US snooping. This anti-Obama poster comes from Hong Kong.

Is Barack Obama a friend? Revelations about his government's vast spying program call that assumption into doubt. The European Union must protect the Continent from America's reach for omnipotence.

June 17, 2013 - 08:09 PM

Print / Send

On Tuesday, Barack Obama is coming to Germany. But who, really, will be visiting? He is the 44th president of the United States. He is the first African American to hold the office. He is an intelligent lawyer. And he is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

The popular German weekly Spiegel's take on Obama's dragnet surveillance of innocent Americans, published on the eve of the President's visit there.