Romney Stumps Abroad

By Mel Lavine

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In case you missed it, Mitt Romney has been abroad showing off his expertise in foreign affairs. In London, the man who managed the Olympic Games in Salt Lake City in 2002 cast doubt on whether the Brits were up to the task of providing enough security and dealing with a posible strike of customs and immigration officials.

The visitor's musings inspired a sharp response from Prime Minister David Cameron: "We are holding an Olympic Games in one of the busiest, most active, bustling cities anywhere in the world. Of course, it's easier if you hold an Olympic Games in the middle of nowhere."

On this side of the Atlantic, conservatives like Karl Rove, George W. Bush's mentor, and the columnist, Charles Krauthammer, were nonplussed over Romney's diplomatic gaffe. "You have to shake your head," said Rove. "Unbelievable, it's beyond human understanding. It's incomprehensible," said Charles Krauthammer, according to Maureen Dowd in Sunday's New York Times.

On his stop in Israel, Romney was in full campaign mode. He said the Palestinians had only themselves to blame for lagging behind the Israelis economically – never mind that "years of Israeli occupation, security measures and blockades have disrupted their territories for years," as the San Francisco Chronicle pointed out.

Further, he insulted the Palestinians – people whose trust he will need if, as president, he has any hopes for brokering the peace efforts of Israelis and Palestinians – by saying, as he did – that cultural differences are the reasons why the Palestinians are so far behind the Israelis.

Like all politicians, Romney must take pains to please his donors. One of them, the casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, a staunch supporter of Israel, is reportedly spending $100 million to make Obama, who is pro-Israeli but obviously not pro enough to please Adelson, a one-term president.

Romney's other audience, as the Times pointed out, is Jewish voters and evangelical Christians in states such as Florida and Ohio where a close election could be decided.

Even as Romney allied himself with hard-liners on Israel he may have got himself into trouble at home with other Republicans. In his bid to win friends on Israel, he called attention to the fact that the Jewish state spends a good deal less on health care than the U.S.

“Don’t go there, governor,” warned the Chronicle...Israel has universal coverage and requires residents to buy coverage – conditions at odds with Republican doctrine and his 2012 campaign positions.”

After London and Israel, wise men in the high command of the GOP, like Karl Rove, will have to put Mitt Romney back together again. Adelson’s multi-millions may not be enough.

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