**Qaddafi’s Good Friend at the UN**

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SWITZERLAND'S NOMINATION OF ITS NATIONAL, Jean Ziegler, to membership on the U.N. Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights illustrates in a nutshell (and a nut) why there is so little hope for meaningful reform of the world body.

The subcommission should not be confused with the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, which has just held its last meeting. The commission has been abolished at the initiative of Secretary General Kofi Annan, who lamented that it had become a stain on the U.N.'s reputation. However, the subcommission, which is a body of "experts" rather than diplomats, does not go out of existence with the commission. It presumably will now be linked with the new Human Rights Council, which is slated to replace the commission as part of the overall reform plan.

Ever since the revelations of massive abuses in the U.N.'s Oil-for-Food program for Iraq, "reform" has been at the top of the U.N.'s agenda. And little wonder given that the Volcker Commission, appointed by Kofi Annan to investigate the scandal, found that more than one undersecretary general and Annan's own son were among the program's illicit beneficiaries.

The deeper corruption of the U.N., however, does not consist of acts of individual venality, but of the betrayal of the principles proclaimed in the charter. Nothing has exemplified that better than the organization's tawdry record on human rights. And no individual embodies that tawdriness more exquisitely than Ziegler.

Until now, he has served as the old commission's "special rapporteur on the right to food." A sociologist by training and a politician, Ziegler did not bring to his post any particular expertise on food or agriculture. His credentials were all in the realm of ideology. Ziegler's main idea was anti-Americanism. He was a founding editor of the journal *L'Empire*, and you don't need many guesses to know which "empire" was the subject. The United States, according to Ziegler, is an "imperialist dictatorship" that is guilty, among other atrocities, of "genocide" against the people of Cuba by means of its trade embargo.

In 1989, Ziegler was one of a group of self-described "intellectuals and progressive militants" who gathered in Tripoli to announce the launching of the annual "Muammar Qaddafi Human Rights Prize," awarded by the government of Libya. Ziegler explained that the purpose of the Qaddafi prize was to counterbalance the Nobel prize, which, he said, constituted a "perpetual humiliation to the Third World."

Winners of the Qaddafi prize have included Fidel Castro, Louis Farrakhan, and recently Venezuela's Hugo Chávez. When no individual of such luminous human rights credentials has presented himself, the award has gone to collectivities. In 1996, it went to a female member of the Cuban Communist party's central committee, a leader of a Ba'ath party women's organization in Saddam's Iraq, and a couple of other "symbols of women's struggle for freedom." In 1990, it went to the "Stone Throwing Children of Occupied Palestine" and in 1991 to the "Red Indians." In 2002, the awardees were "13 intellectual and literature personalities," of whom the most notable were the French Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy and (you guessed it) Jean Ziegler.

The naming of Ziegler did not pass unnoticed and even stirred some protests. In response to these, Ziegler announced that he would turn down the prize on the grounds that he "could not accept an award or distinction from any country because of my responsibilities at the United Nations." At least this is what he told the West. Whether he delivered the same message to Tripoli is unclear, since the Libyan government still lists him as having been one of the 2002 recipients.

As for his work on the issue of food, the nongovernmental organization U.N. Watch has monitored Ziegler's record as special rapporteur. It reports that Ziegler denounced the United States on such "food" issues as the embargo of Cuba on 34 occasions, but "never spoke out for the hungry or criticized any party in 15 of 17 countries deemed by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization to have a man-made food emergency." Like all passionate haters of America, Ziegler also loathes Israel, which he has denounced on dozens of occasions, likening the Gaza strip under Israeli rule to an "immense concentration camp" and demanding suspension of the European Union's trade agreement with Israel.