



United Nations elects some unlikely countries

In a little-noticed abomination last month, the United Nations elected a batch of countries to its Human Rights Council that should demonstrate to the whole world just where the U.N. stands on human rights.

This bunch of demons – China, Russia, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Algeria – will bring a lot of collective expertise to this so-called world body. It's going to be hard to find a larger collection of human-rights violations than these nations have on their collective ledger.

Where to begin? China, where the government decides how many children couples can have, where there is no political opposition and where dissenters often just disappear? Cuba, where the people have been impoverished by decades of one-man rule, and dissenters are allowed to flee over the ocean in leaky boats?

Or Russia, where those who speak out against the leadership wind up in jail? Where elections end with one man holding the reins of power, no matter who is president? Saudi Arabia, where women can't even drive a car in public?

Or maybe you'd rather live in Vietnam or Algeria?

This Gang of Six was elected to the council by the U.N. General Assembly, giving us a glimpse of how much of the world values human rights. The election prompted a howl of protest from independent human-rights groups, but to no avail.

Other nations in this year's class, the Associated Press reported, included Britain, France, the Maldives, Macedonia, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia and South Africa. Most have somewhat better credentials for the task.

Seats are allocated by region, with all 198 member nations voting by secret ballot. That makes it hard to figure out how the choices are made.

A group called Human Rights Watch noted that five of the new members refused to even allow U.N. inspectors visit to check alleged rights abuses. China, Russia and Algeria each has more than 10 outstanding unfilled requests.

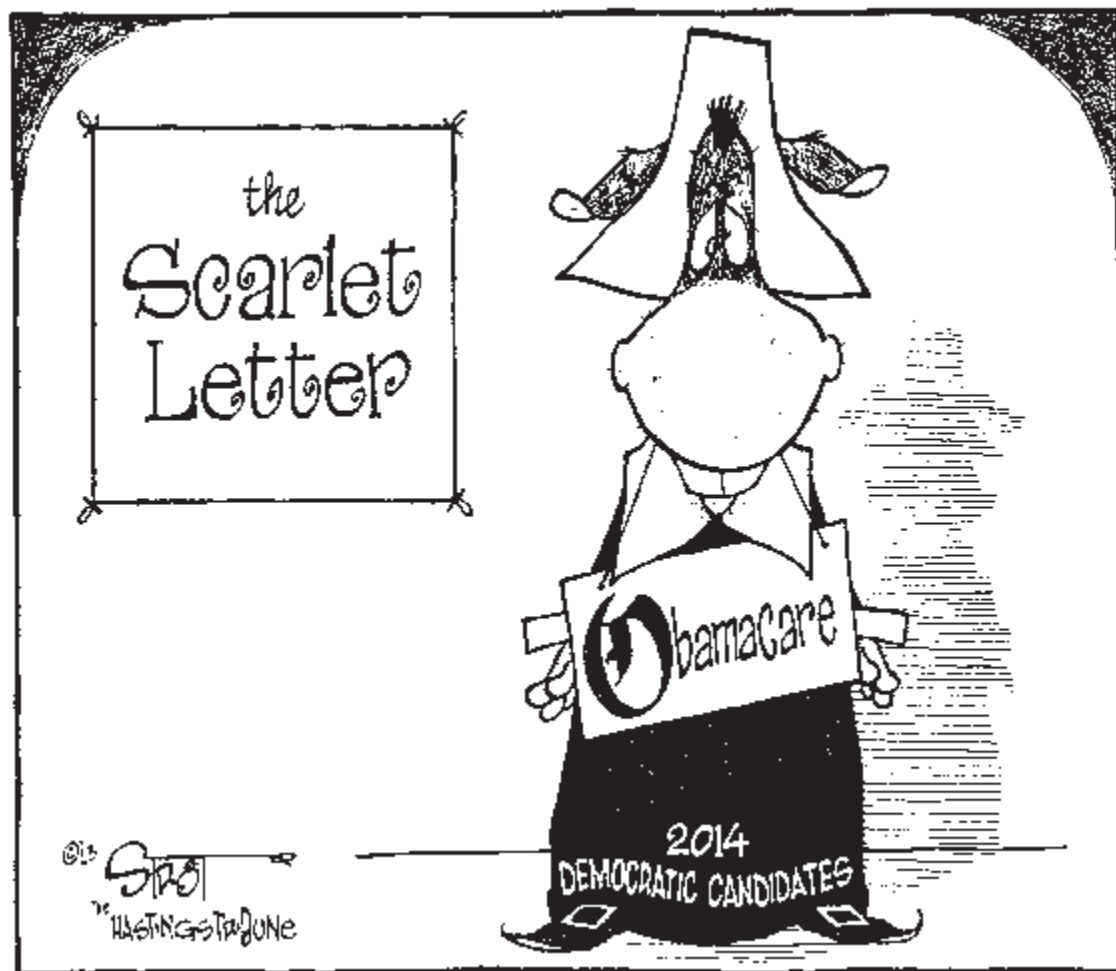
Activists from Tibet protested across the street from the U.S. Headquarters in New York, hanging a banner that said "China Fails Human Rights," something of an understatement.

The head of a Geneva-based group UN Watch denounced what it considered the worst of the worst, the AP reported:

"China, Cuba, Russia and Saudi Arabia systematically violate the human rights of their own citizens.... For the U.N. to elect Saudi Arabia as a world judge on human rights would be like a town making a pyromaniac into chief of the fire department."

The group criticized the U.S. and the European Union for not denouncing this charade. It and like groups pointed out that while the council regularly cites Israel over the Palestinian issue, it has not once adopted a resolution critical of Russia, China or Saudi Arabia.

All of which is a pretty good argument for declaring that our world organization has a long way to go before it can be considered a champion of rights, any way you look at it. You could argue that no nation is perfect in this field, certainly not ours, but it's obvious the U.N. has no grasp of the issue at all. – Steve Haynes



Open Season

Baking cookies with grandchildren

By Cynthia Haynes



My granddaughter is 3 1/2, and I had great plans to teach her to bake cookies this week.

Some of my fondest memories of my grandmother are standing at her kitchen table and learning to cook. We made cakes and cookies, and she showed me how to measure and mix. I learned how to cream butter and sugar together and add the flour so that the cookies came out light and fluffy. I even remember one time when we made a German chocolate cake with boiled icing from scratch, although we both agreed in the end it wasn't really worth the trouble and bought a mix the next time.

Looking back, however, that cake and all those cookies were so worth the trouble. They were a time of togetherness and learning. Mother was a good cook, but she didn't bake when I was young. Grandmother did all of that stuff, and Mom was happy to let her. And, I'm sure, it was nice to have a break from two busy children underfoot when I went over to

grandmother's.

So, I thought, I should continue that tradition. I should find cookie recipes and take them to Georgia with me so that Taylor Tot and I can do some serious bonding over the batter.

Finding cookie recipes around Christmas time is about as hard as finding snow in the Colorado mountains. I soon had clippings from newspapers and magazines and copies out of my hundreds of cookbooks. I was set.

Daughter Lindsay and I looked over the selection when we arrived in Georgia, and picked out four likely candidates that looked like they would be tasty, not too hard to make and, most important of all, not require tons of stuff that wasn't already in the pantry.

We sent Taylor's dad after the stuff we didn't have or would need to replace, and we were ready to go.

But, by then it was bedtime for Taylor, so her mother and I started the dough and put it in

the refrigerator to finish in the morning.

The next day, Taylor was more interested in cartoons and playing outside with Papa Steve than making cookies, so Lindsay and I made the first batch of thumbprint cookies ourselves.

She soon made a batch of Tollhouse cookies because her husband loves chocolate and was looking sad that the thumbprint cookies had no chocolate chips in them.

Then we decided to make hummingbird cookies with cream-cheese frosting. They had nuts, fruit and coconut in them, and while the recipe called for three dozen, when we were done, there were 18 big cookies on the counter and Taylor was still off playing with Papa.

Like so many great plans, mine did not turn out quite as I had hoped, but Lindsay and I had a great time, and so did Taylor and Steve. Maybe next time.

Casey's Comments

Christmas during World War I

By Casey McCormick



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During Christmas 99-years-ago an extraordinary event occurred.

World War I had erupted five months earlier and both the British and German armies were already locked in stagnate warfare along the Western Front in Europe.

However in the middle of the chaos a strange thing happened on Christmas Eve of 1914. The

noise of guns was replaced by men singing carols.

This was followed on Christmas day with soldiers leaving their trenches and meeting with the enemy in "no man's land."

Gifts of cigarettes and plum puddings were exchanged and reports survive of even a soccer match being played.

In what history remembers as The Christmas Truce of 1914, about 100,000 soldiers came together for an unprompted, and

unauthorized, moment of cease fire to celebrate the Holy birth.

Unfortunately this event was not replicated for the next several years of the conflict. Rather, close to 10 million would fall during "The Great War."

But for a brief moment there was "peace on Earth and good will toward men" in the middle of that battlefield.

Honor Roll

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Write Santa Claus

Christmas seen through the eyes of a child is priceless. This year The Saint Francis Herald and Bird City Times would like you to send us your children's letters to Santa! We will publish the letters in the paper, and be sure that Santa receives them and that any letters he writes back get to you!

Send all letters to The Herald at Box 1050, St.

Francis, 67756, or email them to amiller@nwkansan.com. We look forward to celebrating Christmas with your family!



GOD SAYS
Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
Matthew 11:28

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Children's letters to Santa Claus

Dear Santa,

How is Mrs. Claus? What is your favorite cookie? Would you like warm or cool milk to dip your cookie in? Does Rudolf's nose shine bright?

I would like for Christmas a black horse with a saddle and a race car. Thank you Santa.

Love,
Aiden Meyer



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