

Seventy governments at conference in Vienna oppose 'human rights' ploys

by L. Cherry

Amid the platitudes on the importance of revering "human rights," the U.S. State Department publicly threatened to "crack heads" against Third World "renegades" opposed to the real agenda behind those platitudes. The scene was the June 14-25 World Conference on Human Rights in Geneva. The so-called renegades, according to some counts, were the governments of some 70 of the 160 nations attending the conference. These governments, in attempting to counter the hidden agenda, say human rights are relative; they cannot be used to interfere in internal affairs of sovereign states; and that development too must be considered a human right.

Timothy Wirth, head of the U.S. delegation, claimed that the grouping consisted of "stooges" led by the People's Republic of China. Never mind that three of the countries prominently mentioned are India, Vietnam, and Indonesia (current head of the 106-member Non-Aligned Movement)—countries that have fought wars to keep from being controlled by China. "China is at the forefront of a handful of renegade nations trying to slow down or stop the process of drafting a meaningful final document," Wirth told a meeting of NGOs June 17. "These states have power far beyond their status, and the U.S. cannot allow itself to be frustrated. . . . This handful of renegade nations outside the process will not be allowed to kill our efforts to achieve a meaningful document," he continued. Added John Shattuck, deputy head of the U.S. delegation and formerly a top figure in the American Bar Association: "We will not hesitate to crack heads . . . and isolate those who are being most obstructive."

The goals for this conference had been ambitious, and even members of the human rights "mafia" now acknowledge they may have been based on miscalculation. "The elaboration of new declarations and conventions usually takes around 10 years. Given this policy of gradual process; it was a delusion to believe that a large and hastily organized conference could suddenly accelerate the U.N. machine," conceded Adrien-Claude Zoller, director of the International Service for Human Rights in Geneva.

The goals had been: 1) to create a legal, juridical, supranational framework for a Human Rights High Commissioner, who would be able to enforce "human rights" conditionalities internationally; 2) to establish an international criminal court

with the power to try and convict individuals; and 3) to implement "structures for the preventive handling of human rights violations internationally"—in plain English, to institute an international "thought police" which prosecutes countries for merely "thinking" about committing an alleged crime. That was a good bit to swallow. At the time of this writing, with three days remaining to the conference, it seems doubtful that any amount of "head cracking" will be able to sell this program.

'A total flop'

On June 21, Pierre Sane, secretary general of the Amnesty International, the powerful human rights organization run by British intelligence, described the first week of the confab "a total flop, a sham and a week of shame." Sane claimed that some governments had sent government-funded delegations to the conference under the guise of NGOs "to create a smokescreen." Sane complained, "We will have to devise a new strategy to discredit those governments who, in turn, are trying to discredit NGOs." Amnesty is one of about 1,000 NGOs which were invited to attend the conference, but were excluded from most of the meetings of the key committee drafting the final declaration—an action taken by the "renegade" governments.

Peruvian Justice Minister Fernando Vega Santa Gadea, head of his country's Peruvian delegation and vice president of the overall conference, singled out the role of NGOs in Peru for attack. In a speech, he insisted that the genocide of terrorism must be seen as the greatest threat to human rights. "Peru is not going to let the proper theme of human rights be distorted by tendentious or ill-intentioned information, nor by the ties to drug trafficking of some non-governmental organizations which want to play a leading role in the human rights area."

Much to the chagrin of the NGOs, the specter of Bosnia tended to dominate the discussion. "The attitude of Europe on this question is disgusting," Malaysian Ambassador Reduzuan Kuchairi remarked. Shukat Umer, director general of the Foreign Ministry of Pakistan, chimed in that if this World Conference on Human Rights didn't address the issue "of what is going on 200 kilometers from here," it would be

seen by the world as ridiculous. Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic was given the floor June 16 for a short speech in which he described his country as "a bloodstain on your TV screens. . . . Bosnia is everything that human rights are not." He talked about the town Gorazde, "where 60,000 people are awaiting death, as we speak, *now*—an hour from here by airplane. . . . Some 20,000 children in Gorazde are in a position to be killed. Human rights, I ask you, where are the human rights? Where is the political will?"

On June 24, the 51-nation Organization of the Islamic Conference presented a special draft declaration on Bosnia to a plenary session of the World Conference. The OIC declaration rejected the latest Serb-Croat plan for a three-way split of Bosnia, and called for the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia. This sent deputy head of the U.S. delegation John Shattuck into a tantrum. Calling the move a breach of conference principles, he whined, that "The issue of Bosnia is diverting energy from the drafting process!"

Wide spectrum of opposition

It appears that more planning went into opposing the major planks of the conference than went into putting it together. As Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas explained in Geneva (see *Documentation*), following the four preparatory meetings a consensus position had been worked out under the auspices of the Non-Alignment Movement. Also known to have contributed to this process was extensive diplomacy by Malaysia's Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Mahathir insisted that "if democracy is to be the only acceptable system of government within states, there must also be democracy between the states of the world: A few nations on their own cannot be allowed to take it upon themselves to determine the new world order."

Zoller admitted that there has been an attempt to induce the African countries, which "are faced with exceedingly urgent economic problems," to break off from this hard-line opposition to the U.N.-NGO agenda. He said that "efforts were made prior to the conference in Vienna to encourage European countries to show more flexibility in the face of African demands."

According to the daily newspaper of the conference, "China has up to 70 countries on its side of the argument." But the notion that China is the leader is fallacious. The attempt by the U.S.-U.N. apparatus to tar these countries with the Tiananmen massacre brush, is particularly cynical, given that George Bush, Henry Kissinger, and Brent Scowcroft were the first to rush to defend Deng Xiaoping's regime, even before the blood was washed away. Moreover, the United States is the main sponsor of China's slave labor-based "great economic reform." Leaders such as Mahathir are fully aware of these cynical geopolitical games between the United States and China, but that has not prevented them from using China to bolster their own efforts to overturn the "human rights" chessboard.

Documentation

A atas: 'A clash between two western traditions'

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, addressing the World Conference of Human Rights, called the battle line-up in Vienna "the lingering echo of an earlier clash between two western traditions"—that of Alexander Hamilton and that of Thomas Jefferson. Here are excerpts of his speech.

As the state presently holding the chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, we are also entrusted to reflect the consensus position on human rights taken by 108 member states of the movement which met in Indonesia last year. . . .

We are constrained to voice our concern at the recent spate of international media reports that tend to give the impression that the success of this conference is being threatened by a clash of values between the developed countries of the North and the developing countries of the South, by a confrontation between the perceived universal—mostly western—concept of human rights that stresses political and civil rights and the purported "dissident" view, particularly of Asian countries. . . . This is erroneous, unwarranted, and counterproductive. We have not come to Vienna to advocate an alternative concept of human rights, based on some nebulous notion of "cultural revisionism." . . .

If today there appears to be still a debate on the concept of human rights, it is not so much from any contention between East and West or between North and South, but the lingering echo of an earlier clash between two western traditions, between the principle of individual liberty which, for example, Thomas Jefferson passionately espoused, and the principle of a strong, lawful authority which Alexander Hamilton just as passionately advocated.

On the rights of the individual as measured against those of the state, the view of the latter tradition is that "When it comes to a decision by a head of state upon a matter involving its life, the ordinary rights of individuals must yield to what he deems the necessities of the moment." These are not the self-justifying words of some leader of the developing world. They constitute the considered view, in the Hamiltonian tradition . . . of [American Supreme Court] Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes. . . .

Human rights questions are essentially ethical and moral in nature. Hence, any approach to human rights questions which is not motivated by a sincere desire to protect these rights but by disguised political purposes or, worse, to serve as a pretext to wage a political campaign against another country cannot be justified.