

countries, most of which are economically less developed than the countries of Europe or North America, attach the greatest importance to the formulation of the economic and social rights of mankind. The argument is that an International Covenant of Human Rights, setting out standards of living which all men have a right to enjoy (for this is what the formulation of economic and social rights amounts to), would constitute a great step towards securing these rights to men and women everywhere; not only would such a Covenant be a signpost for national governments, which citizens could insist that their governments follow, but it would also impose a firm moral obligation on all governments to take international action to ensure that all men in all countries enjoy the economic and social rights enunciated in the Covenant. The countries which advocate the formulation of economic and social objectives in a Human Rights Covenant are unpersuaded by the arguments of other countries that these economic and social rights are of a very different nature, requiring very different measures of application and implementation, from traditional civil and political liberties; they are unconvinced by the objection that no government could seriously undertake a precise and binding treaty obligation to pass laws to grant such rights. This group of nations has also provided the bulk of support for inserting in one or both Covenants an article regarding the right of self-determination of peoples. The countries of Western Europe, part of the Commonwealth and the United States, maintain that self-determination, although a commendable ideal, is not a right which can be enjoyed by an individual as an individual, and has no place in a Covenant which sets out to protect the rights of men as individuals. Moreover, these last named countries find it hard to know what action a signatory state would have to take to carry out an obligation to secure self-determination of peoples.

A third discernible body of opinion in the United Nations exists in the Soviet Union and the countries which follow its lead. This group has pressed for a single Covenant, for formulation of economic and social rights and for inclusion of the right of self-determination in the Covenants. However, the Soviet Union and its associates have consistently opposed even the mildest proposed measures of implementation of a Covenant or Covenants. The suggestion that the Covenant should have teeth in it to provide for its enforcement is repugnant to the U.S.S.R., allegedly on the grounds that enforcement measures would be an encroachment on the rights of sovereign nations. In other words, the Cominform countries would be prepared to accept a Covenant on Human Rights if there were no provision for enforcement of its articles within their borders. In the circumstances, the attitude of the U.S.S.R. and its satellites is regarded as merely cynical by many other states.

The foregoing may serve to explain the course which discussion of human rights has taken in the United Nations during the period under review. The fifth session of the General Assembly had decided in 1950 that economic and social rights should be included in the same Covenant with traditional civil and political rights. The Canadian Delegation had opposed this resolution of the Assembly, in the company of the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, New Zealand and most of the Western European countries, among