

Our approach at the United Nations — and that of all Western countries — lies along the same lines. Within the confidential procedures of the Commission on Human Rights, we attempt to initiate contacts with governments in order to obtain restraint or resolution of a human rights issue. If the government refuses to co-operate, the issue can be moved into public session. Confrontational tactics and condemnation are avoided, as they will be unproductive. Indeed, they may have a counterproductive impact on the very victims we are trying to protect. This can happen because nations — large or small, rich or poor — are like human beings: proud and sometimes arrogant. They resent criticism from other nations who cannot view the situation from their own perspective. Only when all positive international approaches and attempts at persuasion have had no impact, do responsible governments publicly deplore or condemn the practices of an offender in human rights.

**Politicization
problem**

There is, however, a major problem at the United Nations. When it comes to serious violations of human rights by a government of the right, the subject will be debated sometimes even in public session. This has been the case for Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala and Bolivia. Western democracies and some others engage in the debate out of humanitarian concern; but socialist countries do so for political reasons. On the other hand, when equally serious or considerably more serious violations occur in Marxist and socialist countries, debate is impeded by the countries of a similar political orientation. It is a politicization which I deplore.

We are, however, able to address the human rights issues of Eastern Europe in the CSCE forum. At the Review Conference now in progress in Madrid, Canada has put forward one human rights initiative and is supporting a number of others. We are insisting that the conference reaffirm and follow up on the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Final Act no less intensely than on the security, economic and scientific provisions.

But I am concerned by indications of a degree of politicization in the human rights field in Canada, where public attention is being directed primarily to abuses in countries experiencing oppression from governments of the right. I realize that it is difficult for Canadian organizations to travel to or obtain information about the entirely closed socialist societies. On the other side of the issue, I realize that some Canadian organizations, because of historical, ethnic and family ties, are interested only in developments in Eastern Europe. But I feel strongly that all Canadian human rights organizations should address human rights violations impartially, wherever they occur, and provide to their memberships a broader understanding of how one situation relates to the others.

In closing, I want to assure you that the Canadian government is committed to pursuing vigorously human rights objectives within our over-all Canadian foreign policy objectives. In this, we rely greatly on our partnerships with non-governmental organizations and with parliamentarians. I hope we can continually reinforce our separate, but complementary, endeavours to make respect for human dignity a reality throughout the world.

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