

THE INSURMOUNTABLE CONTRADICTIONS OF LIBERALISM:

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLES IN THE
GEOCULTURE OF THE MODERN WORLD-SYSTEM

The other cultural sign that recognizes the conflict of the two modernities is the movement, primarily in the humanities and the social sciences, of postmodernism. Postmodernism, I hope I have made clear, is not *post*-modern at all. It is a mode of rejecting the modernity of technology on behalf of the modernity of liberation. If it has been cast in this bizarre linguistic form, it is because the postmodernists have been seeking a way to break out of the linguistic hold that liberal ideology has had on our discourse. Postmodernism as an explanatory concept is confusing. Postmodernism as an annunciatory doctrine is no doubt prescient. For we are indeed moving in the direction of another historical system. The modern world-system is coming to an end. It will, however, require at least another fifty years of terminal crisis, that is, of "chaos," before we can hope to emerge into a new social order.

Our task today, and for the next fifty years, is the task of utopistics. It is the task of imagining, and struggling to create, this new social order. For it is by no means assured that the end of one inegalitarian historical system will result in a better one. The struggle is quite open. We need today to define the concrete institutions through which human liberation can finally be expressed. We have lived through its pretended expression in our existing world-system, in which liberal ideology tried to persuade us of a reality that the liberals were in fact struggling against—the reality of increasing equality and democracy. And we have lived through the disillusionment of failed antisystemic movements, movements that were themselves part of the problem as much as they were a part of the solution.

We must engage in an enormous worldwide multilogue, for the solutions are by no means evident. And those who wish to continue the present under other guises are very powerful. The end of what modernity? Let it be the end of false modernity, and the onset, for the first time, of a true modernity of liberation.

The French National Assembly adopted on August 26, 1789 the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen.⁴² It has remained ever since the symbolic assertion of what we today call human rights. It was in effect reaffirmed and updated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted with few abstentions and no negative votes by the United Nations on December 10, 1948.⁴³ There was never, however, a parallel emblematic assertion of the rights of "peoples," at least until the United Nations on December 14, 1960 adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.⁴⁴

The preamble to the 1789 declaration offers as its opening consideration "that ignorance, neglect, and scorn of the rights of man are the sole causes of public misfortune and of the corruption of governments. . . ." We begin thus with the problem of ignorance, as befits a document of the Enlightenment, and the immediate implication is that, when ignorance is overcome, there will no longer be public misfortune.

Why didn't the French Revolution draw up a similar declaration on the rights of peoples? In fact, Abbé Grégoire did suggest in 1793 to the Convention that it seek to codify the laws relating to "the rights and reciprocal duties of nations, the rights of peoples (*gens*)." But Merlin de Douai argued that "this was a proposal that should not be addressed to the Convention of the French people but rather to a general congress of the peoples of Europe,"⁴⁵ and this suggestion was put aside.

The observation was pertinent, but there was of course no such general congress at that time. And when it did eventually come into existence (more or less), in the form first of the League of Nations and then the United Nations, such a declaration was not immediately forthcoming. In 1945 the colonial powers, victorious

in the fight for their own freedom, had still not admitted the illegitimacy of colonialism. It was only in the 1960 declaration, after a large part of the colonial world had already won its independence, that the UN reaffirmed its "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small," and therefore "solemnly proclaim(ed) the necessity of bringing to a speedy and unconditional end colonialism in all its forms and manifestations."

I do not wish to discuss whether human rights or the rights of peoples are inscribed or not in natural law, nor do I wish to review the history of these ideas as intellectual constructs. Rather, I wish to analyze their role as key elements in liberal ideology, insofar as it became the geoculture of the modern world-system in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I also wish to argue the case that the geocultural construct is not only self-contradictory in terms of its logic but that the insurmountable contradiction it presents is itself an essential part of the geoculture.

World-systems all have geocultures, although it may take some time for one to settle into place in a given historical system. I use the word "culture" here in the sense traditionally used by anthropologists, as the set of values and basic rules that, both consciously and subconsciously, govern reward within the system and create a set of illusions that tend to persuade members to accept the legitimacy of the system. There are always persons and groups within any world-system who reject the geocultural values in whole or in part, and who even struggle against them. But as long as the majority of the cadres of the system accept these values actively, and the majority of the ordinary people are not in active skepticism, we can say that the geoculture exists and its values are prevailing.

Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between fundamental values, cosmology, and teleology on the one hand and the politics of implementing them on the other. The fact that groups are in active political revolt does not necessarily mean that they do not subscribe, perhaps subconsciously, to the fundamental values, cosmology, and teleology of the system. It may simply mean that

they feel these values are not being implemented fairly. And finally, we must keep in mind historical process. Geocultures come into existence at one moment, and at a later moment they may cease to hold sway. Specifically, in the case of the modern world-system, I am going to argue that its geoculture came into existence with the French Revolution and began to lose its widespread acceptability with the world revolution of 1968.

The modern world-system—the capitalist world-economy—has been in existence since the long sixteenth century. It functioned for three centuries, however, without any geoculture firmly in place. That is to say, there existed between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries no set of values and basic rules within the capitalist world-economy about which it could be said that the majority of the cadres accepted them actively and the majority of the ordinary people accepted them at least passively. The French Revolution, *latō sensū* changed that. It established two new principles: the normality of political change and the sovereignty of the people.⁴⁶ These principles were so quickly and so deeply rooted in popular consciousness that neither Thermidor nor Waterloo could dislodge them. As a result, the so-called Restoration in France (and indeed throughout the world-system) was at no point and in no sense a true restoration of the Ancien Régime.

The key point to note about these two principles is that they were, in and by themselves, quite revolutionary in their implications for the world-system. Far from ensuring the legitimacy of the capitalist world-economy, they threatened to delegitimize it in the long run. It is in this sense that I have previously argued that "the French Revolution represented the first of the antisystemic revolutions of the capitalist world-economy—in small part a success, in larger part a failure."⁴⁷ It was therefore in order to contain these ideas by drowning them in a larger whole that the cadres of the world-system felt it urgent to elaborate and impose a larger geoculture.

The elaboration of this larger geoculture took the form of the debate about ideologies. I am using the term *ideology* here in a quite specific sense. I believe that the trinity of ideologies that were developed in the nineteenth century—conservatism, liberalism,

and socialism—were in fact the responses to a single question: Given the widespread acceptance of the two concepts of the normality of change and the sovereignty of the people, what political program would be most likely to ensure the good society?

The answers were extraordinarily simple. Conservatives, horrified by these concepts and basically abhorring them, advocated the utmost caution in public action. Political changes, they said, should be enacted only when the claims in their favor were overwhelming, and even then the changes should be undertaken with the minimum of disruption possible. As for popular sovereignty, they argued that it was most wisely utilized when effective power is *de facto* turned over to the hands of those who traditionally exercise it and who represent the wisdom of continuous tradition.

The opposite view was that of the socialists (or radicals). They welcomed change and called upon the people to exercise fully and directly their sovereignty in the interests of maximizing the speed with which changes in the direction of a more egalitarian society could be effectuated.

The conservative and socialist positions were clear-cut and easy to understand: as slow versus as quickly as possible! As much resistance to equalizing tendencies as possible versus as much dismantling of inequalitarian structures as possible! The belief that very little real change is possible versus the belief that anything can be done if only one overcomes the deliberate social obstacles that exist! These are the familiar contours of Right versus Left, a pair of terms that were themselves directly derived from the French Revolution.

But what then is liberalism, which claimed to stand opposed to conservatism on the one side and to socialism on the other? The answer was formally clear but substantively ambiguous. In formal terms, liberalism was the *via media*, the “vital center” (to use a self-description of the twentieth century).⁴⁸ Neither too fast nor too slow, but change at just the right speed! But in substantive terms, what did this mean? Here liberals could in fact seldom agree among themselves, not even within the confines of a specific place at a specific time, and certainly not among liberals located in different places and different time periods.

Consequently, what has defined liberalism as an ideology has been not the clarity of its program but rather its emphasis on process. To be sure, liberals believed political change was inevitable, but they also believed that it would lead to the good society only insofar as the process was rational, that is, that social decisions were the product of careful intellectual analysis. It was therefore crucial that the actual policies be conceived and implemented by those who had the greatest capacity for making such rational decisions, that is, by the technicians or specialists. It was they who could best elaborate the necessary reforms that could, and would, perfect the system in which they lived. For liberals were by definition not at all radical. They sought to perfect the system, not to transform it, because in their view the world of the nineteenth century was already the culmination of human progress, or in a phrase recently revived, “the end of history.” If we are living in the last epoch of human history, then naturally our prime (indeed our only possible) task is to perfect the system, that is, to engage in rational reformism.

The three ideologies of modern times have been, then, three political strategies to cope with the popular beliefs that have dominated our modern world since 1789. Two things are most interesting about this trinity of ideologies. The first is that although all three ideologies were formally antistate, in practice they all worked to reinforce the state structures. The second is that, among the three, liberalism emerged swiftly and clearly triumphant, which can be seen by a pair of political developments: over time, both conservatives and socialists moved their actual programs toward the liberal center, rather than away from it; and it was the conservatives and the socialists, acting separately but in complementary ways, who were in fact largely responsible for implementing the liberal political program, far more than the capital “L” Liberals themselves were. This is why, as liberal ideology triumphed, Liberal political parties tended to disappear.⁴⁹

Within the framework of triumphant liberal ideology, what are human rights and from where are they supposed to come? To be sure, there have been diverse answers to this question. But in general, for liberals the answer has been that human rights inhere

in natural law. Such an answer gives human rights a powerful base with which to resist opposing claims. However, once this is asserted, and once a specific list of human rights is enumerated, most questions still remain open: Who has the moral (and legal) right to enumerate these rights? If one set of rights conflicts with another set, which set prevails and who decides this? Are rights absolute, or are they limited by some rational appreciation of the consequences of their utilization? (This last dilemma is reflected in the famous declaration of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, that freedom of speech does not include the right to shout "Fire!" in a crowded theater.) And above all, who has the right to exercise human rights?

The last question may seem surprising. Is it not obvious that the correct answer is "everyone"? Not at all! In fact, absolutely no one has ever said this. For example, it is almost universally agreed that an infant does not have these rights, or at least not all of them, on the obvious grounds that an infant does not have the mental capacity to exercise them wisely or safely for himself and others. But if not infants, then what about successively the senile aged, small children, sociopaths, felons? And thereupon the list may be extended ad infinitum: what about the young, the neurotic, the soldiers, the aliens, the uneducated, the poor, women? Where is the self-evident line distinguishing capacity from incapacity? There is of course no such self-evident line, and surely not one deducible from natural law. Thus it is that the definition of the persons to whom these human rights apply is inescapably a constantly recurring, current political question.

The definition of who has human rights is in turn closely connected with who may claim to exercise the rights of the people. And here enters another concept deriving from the French Revolution, that of the citizen. For the people who were most clearly authorized to exercise the sovereignty of the people were the "citizens." But who are the citizens? This is meant to be no doubt a group larger than the "king" or the "nobility" or even "persons of property," but it is also a group far smaller than "everyone," even smaller than "everyone resident within the geographic bounds of a given sovereign state."

And therein lies a tale. Over whom does a sovereign's authority lie? Within the feudal system, authority was parcellized. One person could be subject to several overlords and indeed often was. The overlord therefore could not count on undisputed authority over his subjects. The modern world-system created a legal and moral structure that was radically different, one in which the sovereign states, located within and constrained by an interstate system, asserted *exclusive* jurisdiction over all persons falling within their territory. Furthermore, all these territories were bounded geographically, that is, bounded by surveyors' measurements and thus distinct from other territories. In addition, no area within the interstate system was unassigned.

Thus, when "subjects" were transformed into "citizens," the current inhabitants were then immediately divided between "citizens" and "noncitizens" (or aliens). Aliens came in manifold guises; they ranged from long-term (even lifetime) migrants at one extreme to passing visitors at the other. But in no case were such aliens citizens. On the other hand, since the states were congeries of "regions" and "localities," in the early nineteenth century the actual citizens, however defined, were normally persons themselves of quite varied backgrounds—speaking different languages, having different customs, and being bearers of different historical memories. Once subjects became citizens, citizens had therefore to be actively transformed into nationals, that is, persons who would give loyalty to their state priority over other social loyalties. This was not easy, but it was essential if the exercise of popular sovereignty was not to result in presumably irrational intergroup conflict.

Hence while such states as Great Britain, France, and the United States were fostering a sense of nationalism among their citizens,⁵⁰ in other places like Germany and Italy, prestate nationalists were struggling to create states that would in turn foster such nationalism. Two institutions were given the primary responsibility in most nineteenth-century states to promote such a sense of national identity: the primary schools and the army. Those countries who did best in this task were those who flourished most. As William McNeill notes:

Under these circumstances, the fiction of ethnic uniformity within separate national jurisdictions took root in recent centuries, as some of the leading nations of Europe harked back to suitably idealized and arbitrarily selected barbarian predecessors. (It is surely amusing to note that the French and British chose Gauls and Britons as their putative national ancestors, in cheerful disregard of subsequent conquerors and invaders from whom they inherited their respective national languages.) The fiction of ethnic uniformity flourished, especially after 1789, when the practical advantages of a neo-barbarian polity in which all adult males, trained to the use of arms, united by a sense of national solidarity, and willingly obedient to chosen leaders, demonstrated its power against governments that limited their mobilization for war to smaller segments of the population.⁵¹

If you reflect upon it, neither primary schools nor armies have been notorious in their practice of human rights. They are both top-down, quite authoritarian, structures. Transforming ordinary people into citizen-voters and citizen-soldiers may be very useful if one wants to ensure state cohesion, both vis-à-vis other states and in terms of minimizing intrastate civil violence or class struggle, but what does it really do for the promotion and realization of human rights?

The political project of nineteenth-century liberalism for the core countries of the capitalist world-economy was to tame the dangerous classes by offering a triple program of rational reform: suffrage, the welfare state, and national identity. The hope and assumption was that ordinary people would be contented by this limited devolution of reward and therefore would not in fact press for the fullness of their "human rights." The propagation of the slogans—human rights, or freedom, or democracy—was itself part of the process of taming the dangerous classes. The thinness of the social concessions bestowed upon the dangerous classes might have become more salient except for two facts. One, the overall living standards of the core countries were benefiting from the effective transfer of surplus from the peripheral zones. And the

local nationalisms of each of these states was complemented by a collective nationalism of the "civilized" nations vis-à-vis the "barbarians." Today, we call this racism, a doctrine explicitly codified in just this period in just these states, and which came to permeate profoundly all the social institutions and all public discourse. At least, this was true until the Nazis brought racism to its logical conclusion, its ne plus ultra version, and thereby shamed the Western world into a formal, but only partial, theoretical repudiation of racism.

Who were the "barbarians"? The colonial peoples, to be sure. Blacks and Yellows to Whites. The "East" to the "West." The "nonhistoric" nations of Eastern Europe to the "historic nations" of Western Europe. The Jews to the Christians. From the beginning, the human rights of "civilized" nations were predicated on the assumption that they were "civilized." The discourse of imperialism was the obverse of the coin. The duty of the countries who asserted that they respected human rights was, therefore, to "civilize" those who did not respect them, who had "barbarous" customs, and who consequently had to be taken in tow and taught, as children might be taught.

It followed that any "rights of peoples" were reserved for a very few specific peoples, and were not at all the rights of all the other peoples. Indeed, to grant "barbarians" their rights as peoples was thought to result, in practice, in the denial of the individual "human rights" of these peoples. The two sets of rights were therefore placed in the nineteenth century in direct conflict one with the other. There was no way the world could have both.

LIBERALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY SOLVED THE PROBLEM it had set out to solve. Given a world-system in which the doctrines of the normality of change and the sovereignty of the people had come to prevail, how could an upper stratum of men of reason, goodwill, competence, and property keep the "dangerous classes" from upsetting the applecart? The answer had been that it could be achieved by implementing the proper dose of rational reforms. This answer meant in practice limiting the group who could exercise their human rights to *some* of the people as

well as limiting the peoples who could exercise sovereignty at all *even more strictly*. Since, however, in the logic of liberalism, the rights were theoretically universal, the restrictions had to be justified on convoluted grounds and speciously. In theory, then, the rights were asserted as universal, but the last thing liberals wanted was for these liberal principles to be taken literally, that is, to be truly applied universally. In order for these principles not to be taken literally, liberalism needed a constraining force. The constraining force was racism combined with sexism. But of course this could never be avowed by liberals, since both racism and sexism were by definition antiuniversal and antiliberal. Edward Said caught very well the spirit of this second face of liberalism and its consequences:

Along with other peoples variously designated as backward, degenerate, uncivilized, and retarded, the Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment. The Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien. Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or—as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory—taken over. . . .

My point is that the metamorphosis of a relatively innocuous philological subspecialty [Orientalism] into a capacity for managing political movements, administering colonies, making nearly apocalyptic statements representing the White Man's difficult civilizing mission—all this is something at work within a purportedly liberal culture, one full of concern for its vaunted norms of catholicity, plurality, and open-mindedness. In fact, what took place was the very opposite of liberal: the hardening of doctrine and meaning, imparted by "science," into "truth." For if such truth reserved for itself the right to

judge the Orient as immutably Oriental in the ways I have indicated, then liberality was no more than a form of oppression and mentalistic prejudice.⁵²

What happened in the twentieth century was that those oppressed by racism and sexism insisted on claiming the rights that liberals said they theoretically had, in the form both of human rights and the rights of peoples. The First World War marked a political caesura. The breakdown of order among the core states, the "thirty years' war" that went from 1914 to 1945, opened the space for the new movements.

Since the most immediate problem on the world scene was colonialism/imperialism, that is, the juridical control of large parts of Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean by European states (but also by the United States and Japan), the most immediate claim was the rights of peoples rather than human rights. The legitimacy of this demand was recognized most spectacularly by Woodrow Wilson when he made as the centerpiece of global liberalism the theme of the "self-determination of nations." Of course, Wilson intended self-determination to be doled out judiciously, methodically, rationally, when nations were ready. Until then, these nations could be held "in trust" (to use the language of the UN Charter of 1945).

Conservatives tended to be even more cautious, as might be expected, and to consider that any "readiness" was likely to occur only at an indefinitely long time in the future, if ever. Often conservatives fell back on the theme of human rights during the first half of the twentieth century to argue against the rights of peoples. They argued that these colonized populations were not true "peoples," but simply congeries of individuals whose individual human rights might be recognized when an individual had sufficient education and had adopted a sufficiently Western lifestyle to have shown himself—it was rarely herself—to have reached the status of a "civilized person." This was the logic of the formal assimilationist doctrines of a number of colonial powers (e.g., France, Belgium, and Portugal), but the other colonial powers practiced a similar, though informal, mode of categorization and of doling out human rights.

These socialists who were radically antisystemic and antiliberal at the time of the First World War, that is to say, the Bolsheviks (or Leninists) and the Third International, were initially quite suspicious of all talk of the rights of peoples, which they associated with European middle-class nationalist movements. For a long time, they had been openly hostile to the concept. Then, rather suddenly, in 1920, they shifted course quite radically. At the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East,⁵³ the tactical priority of the class struggle within Europe/North America was quietly shelved in favor of a tactical priority for anti-imperialism, a theme around which the Third International hoped to build a political alliance between largely European Communist parties and at least those national liberation movements of Asia (and other parts of the peripheral zones) that were more radical. But, by doing this, the Leninists were in fact joining the liberals in the pursuit of the Wilsonian agenda of the self-determination of nations. And when, after the Second World War, the U.S.S.R. pursued an active policy of fostering "socialist construction" in a series of countries politically linked to it more or less closely, the U.S.S.R. was de facto joining in the pursuit of the world liberal agenda of the economic development of underdeveloped countries.

Hence, we can say that in the years 1945–1970, liberalism had a second apotheosis. If, in the several decades prior to 1914, it had seemed to triumph in Europe, in 1945–1970 it seemed to triumph throughout the world. The United States, world spokesman for liberalism, was the hegemonic power. Its only theoretical opponent, the U.S.S.R., was pursuing a tactical agenda that was not substantively different in terms of the rights of peoples. Hence it was thereby in fact assisting the United States in taming the dangerous classes of the world-system. Furthermore, this liberal policy seemed to be actually paying off for these dangerous classes. The national liberation movements had come or were coming to power throughout the Third World. And they seemed as well to have achieved power (at least partial power) elsewhere, not only via Communist regimes in the Soviet bloc but in the strong role of social-democratic parties in Western Europe and the White Commonwealth nations. And, as part of the incredible

global economic expansion of 1945–1970, the economic growth rates in virtually all peripheral countries were reasonably high. These were years of optimism, even where (as in Vietnam) the struggle seemed quite ferocious and destructive.

On looking back on what seems in retrospect almost a golden era, it is striking how missing any concern for human rights was. Human rights were conspicuous by their absence or diminished role everywhere. From the purge trials in Eastern Europe to various forms of dictatorship in Third World countries (but also let us not forget McCarthyism in the United States and the *Berufsverbot* in the Federal Republic of Germany), it was scarcely an era of the triumph of human rights. But even more significantly, it was not a period in which there was very much rhetorical concern with human rights by the world's political movements. Advocates of human rights causes everywhere were seen as threatening national unity in the cold war struggle. And there was no greater degree of complying with human rights among those Third World states most closely linked to the West than among those most closely linked to the Soviet bloc. Furthermore, U.S./Soviet expressed concern with human rights in each other's sphere was limited to propaganda broadcasts, and it had no serious impact on actual policy.

What has happened since then? Two things, principally: the annunciatory and denunciatory world revolution of 1968, which challenged the liberal geoculture; and the subsequent evidence beginning in the 1970s that the liberal package of concessions was barren. In 1968, what the students and their allies were saying everywhere—in the Western countries, the Communist bloc, and the peripheral zones—was that liberal ideology (including the verbally distinct but substantively similar Soviet variant) consisted of a set of fraudulent promises whose reality was in fact largely negative for the large majority of the world's population. Of course, the revolutionaries tended to talk everywhere in terms of the specifics of their countries—which were different in the United States and Germany, Czechoslovakia and China, Mexico and Portugal, India and Japan—but the same themes recurred.⁵⁴

The world revolution of 1968 did not dismantle the world-system. Far from it. But it did dislodge liberalism from its place as

the defining ideology of the world-system. Both conservatism and radicalism moved away from the liberal center, more or less back to their topographical location of the first half of the nineteenth century. And this thereby upset the delicate balance that liberalism had sought to establish in limiting the revolutionary implications of both human rights and the rights of peoples.

How this balance was upset can be seen by looking at the impact of the second major change, that of the socioeconomic structuring of the world-system. Since circa 1967/73, the world-economy has been in a Kondratieff B-phase, a period of stagnation. This stagnation has effectively nullified the economic gains of most peripheral zones, with the exception of an East Asian corner, which has been the locus for the kind of production relocation to a limited segment of the world-economy that is a normal feature of Kondratieff B-phases. It has also resulted (at varying paces) in a decline in the real income of the working classes of the North. The bloom is off the rose. And the deception has become enormous. The hope for steady, orderly improvement of life prospects held out by world liberal forces (and their de facto allies, the world Communist movement) has collapsed. And, as it collapsed, the degree to which the rights of peoples was in fact meaningfully achieved has come into question by the presumed beneficiaries themselves.

This questioning of the meaningfulness of what had previously been considered the successful achievement of the rights of the peoples in the post-1945 era had two political consequences. On the one hand, many persons turned to pursuing the rights of new "peoples." Perhaps, they thought, it was that the rights of their "people" had not been recognized. Hence new and more militant ethnicities, secessionism, claims of "minority" peoples within existing states which went along with claims for other groups or quasi peoples such as women, gays and lesbians, the disabled, the aged. And, on the other hand, if the rights of the peoples had not paid off, then why suppress concern with human rights in order to achieve the rights of the peoples? Hence, within the Soviet bloc and within Third World one-party states or military dictatorships, there was a sudden upsurge in claims for

the immediate implementation of human rights. This was the movement for so-called democratization. But also within the Western world this was a time of the dismantling of structures that had previously seriously limited the expression of human rights, as well as a time of the creation of new rights, such as the "right to privacy" in the United States.

Furthermore, not only did everyone seem to start talking about human rights in their own countries, but they started talking about it for other countries: Carter's proclamation of human rights as a concern of U.S. foreign policy, the Helsinki accords, the spread of movements like Amnesty International and Médecins du Monde, and the willingness of intellectuals in the Third World to discuss human rights as a general issue and indeed as a priority issue.

The two movements of the last ten to twenty years—the search for new "peoples" whose rights needed to be affirmed, and the more intense claims concerning "human rights"—were both reactions to the deceptions concerning the era 1945–1970, which resulted in the world revolution of 1968—a revolution that centered precisely around the theme of the falsity of the hopes of global liberalism and the nefarious intents of world liberalism in having offered its program of rational reformism. The two responses seemed at first to be a single one. The same people who were asserting the rights of the "new" peoples were also demanding greater human rights.

However, by the late 1980s, and particularly with the geopolitical upheaval of the erstwhile U.S. hegemonic system, marked by the collapse of the Communisms, the two movements began to move in separate, and even opposite, ways. By the 1990s there were whole movements using (once again) the theme of human rights precisely to counter the rights of the "new" peoples. This may be seen in the neoconservative anti-political correctness campaign in the United States. But it may be seen just as much in the proclamation by Médecins du Monde and allied French intellectuals of the *droit d'ingérance*⁵⁵ (the right to interfere)—to interfere, that is, in Bosnia and Somalia today; in China and Iran tomorrow; and (why not?) in Black-dominated municipal governments in the United States the day after tomorrow.