

BOOKS AND REVIEWS

INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS¹

More and more attention is being given to the problems of human rights to which the *International Review* referred several times last year. The World Veterans Federation has now produced a brochure of some 124 pages entitled *Institutions for the protection of human rights* which gives a report of special sessions held on the subject by the WVF in Paris in 1964.

The central theme of the report is described as follows in the introduction: "... the protection of human rights and freedoms must be treated as a basic responsibility of society and measures to that end must be incorporated in the central structure of each social and political system". Then follows a description of the institutions created to that end on the national, regional and international level.

Seven writers in turn analyse subjects related to human rights and their protection in the world today.

The international institutions are dealt with by Professor René Cassin, one of the promoters and authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by Mr. Nicolas Valticos, Head of the International Standards Division, International Labour Office. Mr. A. H. Robertson, Head of Directorate of Human Rights, Council of Europe and Mr. Sean MacBride, Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists, describe some of the national requirements. Observations concerning their countries were made by the Nawab Ali Yavar Jung Bahadur, Ambassador of India to France, Mr. Gabriel d'Arboussier, former Ambassador of Senegal to France and Mr. Hubert L. Will, Judge of the United States District Court. The session was opened with an address by Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, Judge of the International Court of Justice, referring to the growing need of an International sense of morality: "... This is the Age of Man. Man is beginning to be

¹ Obtainable in French and English from the Fédération Mondiale des anciens combattants, 16, rue Hamelin, Paris (16^e).

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conscious of his own position in the universe and demands that his personality and dignity shall be accorded due recognition and respect. He is beginning to take note of that which his fellow beings, society and the State owe to him and of that which, in turn, he owes to them. The process needs to be stimulated and accelerated. This consciousness needs to be aroused where it may be still lacking and to be sharpened where it has been awakened. In this context emphasis must be laid on man's obligations and duties towards his fellow beings as the principal means of securing his own rights, freedoms and privileges, for they are the obverse and reverse of the same coin."...

This work is of great interest and its publication is in the WVF's tradition since that body, at all general meetings to which the ICRC has been convened has, ever since its foundation, devoted itself to defending the principles laid down in the Universal Declaration. Furthermore, Mr. René Cassin emphasises in that brochure the importance of the Red Cross and its action in protecting human rights on the international level. In concluding this brief analysis, we quote the following passage in which he affirms that idea.

"It is my present task to speak to you of the international protection of human rights. You will not be surprised to hear that this is a comparatively new thing. It is true that philosophers, reformers and religious teachers have in the past dreamed of the solidarity and equality of all mankind. But they were few. The concept of solidarity and equality of all mankind was for a long time impeded by the isolation of the various civilizations and the distances separating peoples from one another and the non-existence of mass communication media. After all, it was not until the end of the 18th Century that the human race began to revolt against slavery, and it was this struggle against slavery which marked the beginning of the international protection of human rights. And in spite of the fact that the struggle has lasted so long and in spite of the means employed against it, there is still slavery in the world, as you know. The second great step was the Red Cross and 1863 may be considered as an important date in the history of international protection." ...

J.-G. L.