

## HUMANIST ASPIRATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Last year, the *American Red Cross Youth Journal*,<sup>1</sup> Washington, published a summary of a study on human rights and so, by way of information, we are reprinting some of the main ideas expressed.

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For the author, unless governments can be made accountable we cannot come to trust them or be sure that they will respect human rights. A nation can survive only if all its members have the chance to take their own decisions, as government-manipulated robots are not a nation.

There are various conspiracies against human rights: there are those of governments, those of certain elites whose prime aim is to safeguard their own privileges, those of self-interest, because the values of many persons do not awaken in them a love of their neighbour or a truly humane pattern of behaviour towards persons not belonging to the very limited group to which they themselves belong.

The defenders of man rise up against these various conspiracies. Humanist aspirations are indestructible and the drive of so many men and women towards justice, their acts of pity and of solidarity with those whom they consider their fellow beings without regard to colour, nationality or race is the seedbed from which the fragile sprouts of human rights secure nourishment. But the defender of these rights has an arduous and discouraging role to play. He has to be the ultimate realist, avoiding sentimentalism yet conscious of the interdependence of human needs and the unifying tie of mutual empathy.

He must reach out to his fellow human beings and know that inhumanity and cruelty are self-destructive for, over a span of time, they generate counteractions. If he can do nothing to undo the

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from a study by Mr. Philip E. Jacob, professor of political science at the Universities of Pennsylvania and Hawaii.

inhumanities of the past, the defender of man must try to curtail their continuance in the present and their perpetuation in the future.

This is where, what the author calls the " Politics of Humanization " come in. The government should be induced to become the ally of man in the defence of his rights. The individual must be able to appeal above the source of discrimination. Men and women must be made to understand, once and for all, that the welfare of all is more vital than the special interests jealously defended by each individual.

The central target of this human rights lobby should be to expose violations of such rights to the judgement of outsiders who have been neither victim nor, of course, perpetrator of the alleged injustice. It would, therefore, be advisable to encourage private and voluntary activity while, at the same time, the principle of inquiry by the world community should be acknowledged. In this way the power of private interests will slowly be weakened until it is finally destroyed, while the powers of moral and rational potential in every human being, will gain in strength. The author ends by saying that conspirators against human rights will be caught in a trap and will grow aware of the deep-seated humanistic impulses which, despite all, throb within themselves.

Can the conspiracy be foiled? That depends on the power of reason and of moral concern to transform hostility into trust, hypocrisy into integrity, and narrow self-interest into true social responsibility.

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