

Every Child Should Have a Chance

Human Rights

by ELSIE LOCKE

Earlier this century there lived in Poland a doctor named Janusz Korczak who became famous as a writer of books for children. He loved children so well that he gave up his medical practice to look after an orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto.

The Ghetto was an area set aside for poor Jewish families, and these children had all known hardships; but worse was to come. The war began, the Nazi armies marched into Poland, and in their pride and power these Nazis pretended that the Jews were not quite human, not worthy to live at all. The orphanage children were among many thousands sent to concentration camps and killed.

Korczak was not a Jew and the Nazis thought it wiser to offer his freedom to such a famous author. There was one way, and only one, which Korczak could take to show the Nazis his contempt for their inhumanity and to repeat his belief that every child has its value. He asked that he be allowed to go with the children to their death.

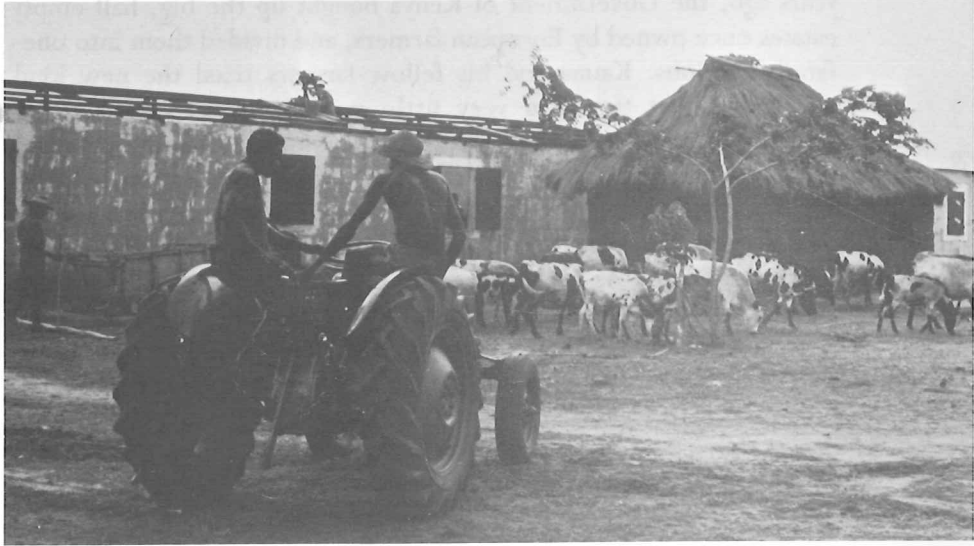
Stamp collectors may have seen the memorial stamps issued by Poland in honour of Janusz Korczak. This tragedy was among many which were fresh in the minds of delegates to the United Nations when, on 10 December 1948, they approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Declaration has many clauses but one simple message. Every one born on this earth has the right to grow and live as a human being. It does not matter what language he speaks, what religion he believes in, or what is the colour of his skin or the shape of his features. Scientists have proved that there are no differences between the various races in nature-given intelligence and ability. The marvellous variety of customs and ways of living have nothing to do with the size of our brains, for we all belong to the same gifted race: the human race.

We are all entitled to our "rights" but we do not all receive them. To achieve them for everyone on earth is something to aim

at; and in 1968, "Human Rights Year", the United Nations organization has asked us all to think about this, to measure our progress and to consider what more we ought to be doing.

I have selected a few word pictures to illustrate a very few of the "Rights".



Student learning to drive a tractor at a farm school in Dahomey, West Africa. This farm has received equipment and help from UNESCO. In the background is part of the school's herd.

Everyone has the right to food, clothing, housing and social services.

KENYA

Juma was helping his father Kauna to harvest the coffee beans. Together they worked with energy, for over there in the house—a modern house with real windows and a corrugated iron roof—Juma's mother was cooking a good dinner of maize and vegetables. Most of the food came from their own land. This was a big step forward, because only a few years ago Kauna did not have any land of his own.

Now everything was changing fast. No more grass huts, tiny food plots and skinny animals grazing on common land that nobody looked after. A fence enclosed the pasture for the Jersey cows.

A Land Rover dashed past: the vet. must have work to do nearby. Kauna had vegetables, maize and wheat to use at home or to market in the nearest town; he also grew coffee and pyrethrum for export. This brought in the money to pay for the land.

Much as the Seddon Government did in New Zealand seventy years ago, the Government of Kenya bought up the big, half-empty estates once owned by European farmers, and divided them into one-family sections. Kauna and his fellow farmers tried the new kind of farming, but they had very little cash. However, there was a way to find the help they needed; they joined the co-operative.

It was through the co-op. that they could have the vet. in his Land Rover. Through it they could market their crops, process the coffee, dry the pyrethrum, collect milk for the creamery, and spray the crops. As these products brought in their income, new plans were in store: a truck and tractor were next on the list.

Juma and Kauna sang as they worked. They knew that this was an experiment; and great was their faith that it would succeed.



No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.

PAKISTAN

A canal was being dug through rough country in West Pakistan. It was slow work through lonely deserts and jungles. Gangs of men and boys worked with spades and shovels and donkey carts to carry away the spoil. They did not receive high wages to make up for being so far from their usual homes, as men do in New Zealand on remote construction sites like Manapouri. What persuaded them to come? The few people who passed that way were not curious, or if they asked a friendly question, the young boys did not answer.

Who could know that they would be beaten if they talked? And that at night they were chained to their beds in the camp to prevent them from running away? These boys were recruited by the simplest of methods: they were kidnapped.

When the Government of Pakistan found this out, about five hundred children and adults were set free, although at first they had to be kept under guard in case the contractors took out their revenge upon them. Then the kidnappers were put on trial and

sent to jail. Were other people guilty too? An inquiry had to be started to find ways of making sure that this kind of slavery did not happen again.

THE MIDDLE EAST

We often think all this is in the past, when we hear American Negro singers with their old triumphant song:

No more auction block for me,

No more, no more. . .

No more driver's lash for me,

Many thousands gone.

The last country to abolish slavery by law, Saudi Arabia, did this only in 1962. However, it is not always easy to enforce the laws where slave traders have methods too clever for the few and the poorly trained police. A slave is usually a slave from childhood and is kept ignorant of any rights he may have.

Every good Muslim tries to make a pilgrimage at least once in his lifetime to the holy city, Mecca, in Saudi Arabia. A poor man might succeed in getting himself there, but getting home remains a problem: he might become a slave rather than starve to death. It is not long since eight thousand pilgrims were prevented from embarking on the Sudanese shore of the Red Sea because they did not have enough money for the journey both ways, and because there was a suspiciously large number of young girls with them. It was known from experience that these girls could disappear into the illegal slave market of Mecca. They were the "return ticket".

Even in our modern age, the Anti-Slavery Society of Britain finds work to do in many backward corners of the world.



*Everyone is entitled to these rights and freedoms
without distinction of sex.*

TUNISIA

Amala is a teacher who lives in Tunis, North Africa. This is an Arab country where for hundreds of years women had to wear the veil whenever they left their closed-in homes, and to be always obedient to their elders and their menfolk. Everything was arranged

in the life of a girl, including marriage, perhaps to a complete stranger.

Twelve years ago the Government set about modernising the country and passed a new law giving women the rights of citizenship.

Amala went to school and then to college where she fell in love with a young man attending the same classes. Her parents were shocked when she decided to marry this man instead of leaving the choice to them, but they could do nothing about it. When he was chosen to attend a conference in Europe, Amala, like any other girl, went back to her old home while he was away.

Everything was much the same with the old couple. They could not become used to the new ways. The very first day her mother said, "Amala, you must be home by seven o'clock."

Amala smiled inside to herself. She was a modern woman, she wore western clothes, she could vote, she could read any books she chose, and she had never worn a veil. But Amala loved her mother and she understood that old habits can change only slowly.

So, like a little girl, Amala the teacher came home at seven o'clock.



Two science students working with a microscope at an international school for girls in Saigon, Vietnam. This school receives aid from UNESCO.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; to freedom of speech and opinion, and of peaceful assembly and association.

TERITORIO

Joe Autoro lay on his back and turned over in his mind, as he always did before going to sleep, the experiences of the day. One small scene haunted him. An old man rooting among the garbage bins of an alley, looking for food, had lifted his head and looked into Joe's eyes with a strange, pleading look. His face was gentle, the face of a man who had never played a mean trick on any one in his whole life.

Joe drifted off to sleep.

Three hours later he woke suddenly and completely. The old man's face was alive in his memory and the words of a story were pouring through Joe's head. Joe switched on the light, reached for pencil and paper and wrote the story down. When he had ended, and stuffed the pages under the mattress and turned out the light again, he was trembling all over with the sadness of what he had written.

A week later, Joe took out the crumpled, scribbled pages and read them carefully. Again he felt that inner trembling, that deep feeling of sadness. No, this wasn't only a story that he had dreamt up. It rang true; it laid bare the unhappy lives of many good citizens of his country. Others would read it and they too would be stirred to realize that a good old man could end his days like this.

Others would read it? But how? The Government never admitted that anything was very wrong in Teritorio. While Joe was writing, he was thinking only of the old man; the Government had not entered his mind. Now he knew that the story would be considered disloyal, an accusation against the people who permitted such injustice. There were laws by which both writer and publisher could be imprisoned, and a magazine suppressed before any one had a chance to read it. Joe knew better than to expect a fair trial on such a matter.

No! There was not an editor of any magazine who would dare to print his story. If Joe valued his own safety he would burn

the paper and forget it. But how could he forget? Within his mind the old man's face turned again as if to say: Are you deserting me, Joe? Are you throwing me away with your own conscience?

Courage, that was all he needed; courage. Then Joe remembered a girl named Hera who had plenty of courage. She had whispered that there was a duplicator in her office which she could use. If Joe typed his story on to stencils and slipped them to Hera, she would run off the copies and he could pass them on like chain letters. Of course he would never be paid for his work; indeed, it would cost him the money for the stencils and the paper; but what did that matter? People would read his story and pass it on, saying quietly: "Read this, it's good; it's true!"

Joe locked the door and began to type his story.

Who is Joe Autoro, and where is Teritorio?

These names mean Joe the Author, in any country at all. There are many nations with different kinds of Government where a man may not speak or publish what is in his mind and heart; or where he may be imprisoned for joining together with other people to set things right where he thinks they are wrong.

If we read our newspapers and books we hear, quite often, about Joe Autoro, under one name or another.



Everyone has the right to education.

SAMOA

Mata put her baby brother down on the ground and shook out her bright print dress. "I must hurry now, Mumma, I'll be late for school. It's arithmetic lesson this morning. Bring baby down and watch us measure up that new taro patch! We write down all the figures and we use the measure and it comes out straight, not all wriggly like our old garden."

Her mother Sima watched her go, and shook her puzzled head. She herself had never learned to read and write. Did she need book learning to be a good wife and mother? Many of these youngsters gained only one idea from their education: to rush off to New Zealand



Children listening to an educational broadcast at a small school in Samoa.

and make themselves a lot of money, like her cousin Sione. That was no way to live!

But Māta's father had helped to build a new school with the teacher's house beside it. All the men had worked on it together. Its poles were of local timber, and it had a thatched roof and rolled mats which could be let down in stormy weather. Mata's father praised the books in that school—the new ones printed in Samoan and the coloured picture books with English words underneath that had been sent by New Zealand children to show what the rest of the world was like. He even backed Mata up when she wanted to go to secondary school, although she would have to leave home, and board at a hostel or the mission.

Sima knew that in some villages the children still had no education because the men had not built a school and there were not yet enough teachers to go round. But why couldn't Mata just go on at the same school after she had learned everything, and teach the younger children in her turn, as their own village schoolmaster had done? Wasn't that enough?

Oh, it was hard to understand these children who wanted so much. Perhaps she should go down to see this measuring, if only to please Mata.

Sima washed the clothes and spread them to dry, then took up the baby and called her little boy to run alongside. She passed one taro patch that Mata's class had already laid out. Yes, it was certainly neat. Perhaps there was some use in this arithmetic. Perhaps it was true that new ways would come to Samoa when everybody could use these strange figures and letters, and read newspapers and books. It might even be true that these new ways would be good.

NEW ZEALAND

"Big heap of homework, Sam," grumbled Terry as the two boys separated at the school corner. "Blow having to draw title pages on all the exercise books! I can't draw for peanuts, can you?"

"With twenty coloured pencils you could make a good mess," grinned Sam. The grin was to cover up what he really wanted to say: With twenty coloured pencils, how about lending six to me?

They had just come into Intermediate School and Sam wasn't sure how to take his new friend. He walked home alone, kicking at the weeds in the footpath and feeling desperate inside. He *could* draw; it was one of the things he was best at doing. But since his father had cleared out and they'd moved into the flat, what was the good of asking for coloured pencils! His mother nearly threw a fit when he told her how many exercise books he needed.

The old lady who always wore a flowered hat indoors was glaring through her verandah window as Sam stumped inside. A bit later on, when his little sisters were playing with pot-lids or something like that, she'd take a long-handled broom and tap the ceiling which was the Andersons' floor, to protest about the noise they made. And Mrs Anderson would say: "What else can we do, four of us in one room, I can't put them on the street can I?" And Sam would say, "Oh don't you worry about her Mum." It was always happening. These flats were pushed up so close together.

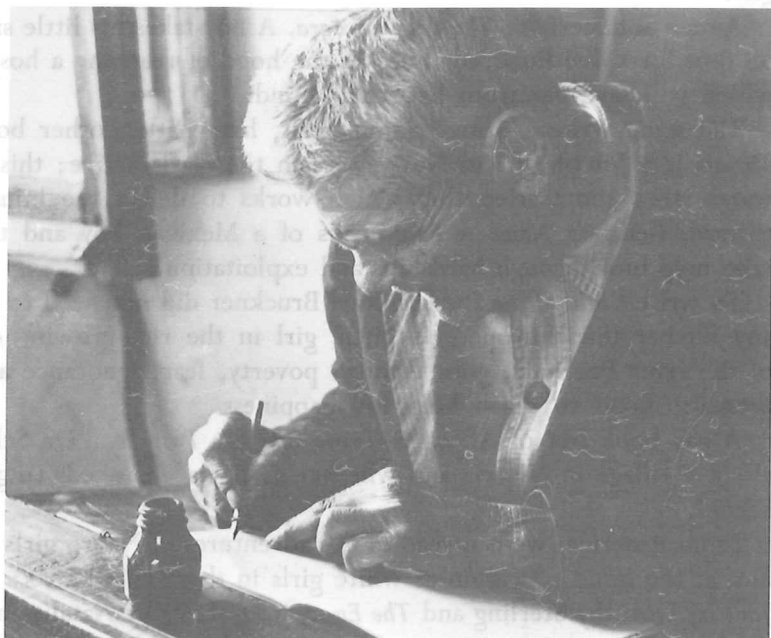
When tea was over Mrs Anderson said: "Is there homework, Sam? Look, I'll clear the mending off this end of the table, do you think you can manage there?"

Sam took out his exercise books and knew it was hopeless—quite hopeless. He slammed them down on the table, banged the door and ran down the stairs, taking no notice of the glares from the old lady in the funny hat. Two square feet of table, little sisters banging pot-lids round his ankles, and no coloured pencils, no books or magazines for cutting pictures out of: how could he possibly make a title page? And how could he explain to the teacher? What could he say to his new friend? Terry would think he was silly.

Sam walked along the street, kicking at the weeds on the footpath again. He felt awful now about running out and not trying to explain to his mother. She'd be just as upset, though, if he asked for money to buy coloured pencils.

Maybe somebody would help, if Sam could pluck up the courage to tell them? Maybe somebody would notice, without being told?

He didn't want very much. Only a quiet room and some coloured pencils.



An old villager learning to write in Calabria, one of the more backward parts of Italy. The war against illiteracy is being waged not only in the undeveloped countries, but wherever it is found.

BOOKLIST

There are so many things to say about Human Rights that it would take many books to say them. Fortunately there are quite a number of stories in our libraries where the children of today, instead of doing common things like being unjustly accused of theft or chasing crooks or getting lost, are caught up in this exciting battle for true freedom.

These four books are about India:

Ruth Philpott Collins: *The Flying Cow*. The cow is an improved breed and a gift to the village, where not everyone approves of such new-fangled ideas.

Shirley L. Arora: *What then, Raman?* A boy finds the answer to the question: what should he do in his own village now that he can read and write?

Marie Thoger: *Shanta*. The adventures and problems of an Indian girl.

Aimee Sommerfelt: *The Road to Agra*. A boy takes his little sister on foot for three hundred miles in the hope of reaching a hospital which will save her from becoming blind.

The same writer, Aimee Sommerfelt, has written other books. *Miriam* is a Jewish girl in Norway when the Nazis arrive; this is a warm story about friendship which works to defeat the injustice towards her. *My Name is Pablo* tells of a Mexican boy and those who help him through hardships and exploitation.

To write *Child of the Swamps*, Karl Bruckner did not need to look any further than Europe. His little girl in the rice-growing delta of the river Po, Italy, goes through poverty, fear, ignorance and a dramatic flood to reach help and happiness.

A gay book out of Africa is *Taiwo and her Twin* by Leta Schatz, about a village in Nigeria and whether or not a girl needs to go to school.

From America, we can read of the adventures of Negro girls who aim at the same education as white girls in these two books: *Mary Jane* by Dorothy Sterling and *The Empty Schoolhouse* by Natalie Savage Carlson. These stories are warm in friendship and family life. So is R. Shotwell's book *Roosevelt Grady*. Roosevelt's parents are crop-pickers moving from camp to camp, and the boy wants to

stay in one place long enough to learn “putting into” as well as “taking away”.

An unusual book is *The Stone of Peace* by Karah Feder-tal, which tells of a Moroccan Jewish boy in a kibbutz in Israel and how he helps make peace with the nearby Arabs.

This could be an endless list but there is no endless space for it—or for the new books which are always being written. The keen reader can exercise a Human Right for himself, and ask the librarian!



Indians in Colombia, South America, exercising their right to vote