

## **The Humanist Forum by Silo Moscow, Russia, October 7th, 1993**

The Humanist Forum has the objective of studying and determining positions about global problems in the world today. As such, the Forum as a cultural organisation amply concerns itself with relating in a structural way to the phenomena of science, politics, art and religion. The Humanist Forum makes freedom of conscience and ideological non-prejudice the essential conditions for work in the comprehension of the contemporary world's complex phenomena.

For me, the Forum as a continuing and permanent entity, has the aim of converting itself into an instrument of information interchange and discussion between people and institutions belonging to the most different cultures of the world. Its permanent activities include the dissemination of relevant information among members.

One could ask whether different existing institutions would not be able to carry out this work with more success, given their experience, economic situation and professional and technical resources. One would think that university centres, private and official foundations and even cultural institutions of the United Nations would have the means to undertake important research, and from there disseminate conclusions, supposing that they would be of some value. We do not discount collaboration and interchange with different entities, but we need more independence and great freedom to make our own judgement in the formulation of questions, in the definitions of the areas of interest, and this is not so easy in the case of institutions which have their own dynamics, and material and ideological dependencies. The Humanist Forum plans to lay the foundations for a future global discussion. But it should not disqualify the contributions made until today by different currents of thought and of action independent from the practical success or failure that they may have had. More interesting is it to understand that this planetary civilisation, born amid a diversity of positions, values and lifestyles will prevail in spite of the pounding of the homogenising currents. In this sense, we aspire to a universal human nation, possible only if diversity exists. It should not be possible to impose central domination on the periphery, a certain lifestyle, system of values, ideological or religious prejudices at the expense of others. Today we are seeing that centralisation generates progressive separatist responses, because the true identity of peoples and regions which could converge towards a real federation of ethnic communities is not respected. Economic control cannot produce miracles, though there still are people who believe that credits for development are due if there has been a previous reform of the State: then - it would be believed - in the legislation, mode of production, social habits, clothing, eating habits, religion, and the way of thinking! Such naive absolutism is finding difficulties in imposing itself, and as in the case of the separatism noted earlier, is contributing to the hardening and the radicalisation of positions in all fields. If, indeed, through the dictatorship of money it was possible to establish an ideal society, the theme would admit more time for discussion. But what is seen is the achievement of a decadent society, without meaning for society or individuals, where it is necessary also to accept the requirement of human evolution. The result is an increase in disorder and general hardship.

The Humanist Forum cannot lose sight of the warranty of diversity, it cannot study different cultures with the point of view of a zoological primitivism, according to which the culture in which one is included represents the peak of an evolution which should be imitated by others. Much more important is it to understand that all cultures make their contribution to the great human construction. But the Humanist Forum should state its minimum conditions: the first is that it should not allow those currents that promote discrimination or intolerance; the second is it should not tolerate those ethos that promote violence as a method or faction to impose their aims. Save for these limitations, there should be no others.

The Humanist Forum is internationalist, but does it mean that by reason of its universal quality it disqualifies regional and particular issues? How can someone be disqualified for loving their own town, land, customs, people and traditions? Could we condemn such a person as a "nationalist" so as to stop taking that someone into account? Loving one's own roots means to be generous in the consideration of the work and the suffering of previous generations. This "nationalism" becomes distorted only when one's own affirmation disparages the recognition of other communities, other peoples. What right would this Forum have to ignore the contributions of those who feel socialist, wanting to achieve an egalitarian and just society? What would be rejected but one of the many possible models in which that ideal is twisted by the imposition of a homogenising tyranny? Why would this Forum no longer take into account that liberal who considers his economic model an instrument for the well being of all, not of just a few? Would the Forum have to discriminate against believers or at heists for reason of their respective beliefs? Could the Forum maintain at heart the superiority of some customs above others? I believe that limitations should not be other than and

exclusively those two highlighted earlier. The Forum includes rather than excludes human variety.

I cannot expand more in this presentation. I would only like to mention some themes about which we all want to have a clear understanding and about which we need to find the best practical formula for action. These themes are, in my view, racism and the widespread discrimination; the increasing intervention of supposed peace organisations in the internal affairs of countries; the manipulation of human rights as a pretext for intervention; the truth about the state of human rights in the world; the increase in world unemployment; the increase in poverty in different regions and layers of opulent societies; the progressive deterioration of health and education; the actions of separatist forces; the increase of drug addiction; the increase in suicide; religious persecution and the radicalisation of religious groups; psychosocial phenomena of alteration and violence; and the real dangers, duly prioritised, of environmental destruction. We would also like to have a clear perception of the phenomenon of destructuring which, starting in social and political groups, end sup compromising interpersonal relationships, cultural links, and projects for joint action among communities.

I would like to draw the attention of those setting in motion the working commissions, in the sense that the Forum will not require a complex organisation but rather some mechanisms of contact and circulation of information; that it will not need enormous resources to function; and that economic problems will not be disruptive for an organisation of this type; that it should count on a periodic information medium in the form of a bulletin rather than a formal magazine; that it will connect people and institutions that can make joint predictions but because of distances are prevented from doing so and finally; it will count on an agile body of translators - perhaps a commission of the Forum may be able to constitute the World Centre of Humanist Studies. This would contribute to regular activities, setting certain priorities, and it may also give a time-table for tasks to be carried out.

I give fraternal greetings to the members of this Forum and I express to all best wishes for the realisation of the work which starts today.