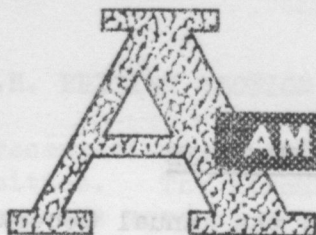




AMNESTY



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BULLETIN

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CENTRAL 7867

SECRETARIAT

Chairman of the
Executive Committee
(British Section) Lionel Elvin

Honorary Secretaries Peter Benenson
Neville Vincent

Honorary Treasurer Duncan Guthrie

General Secretary Albert Lodge

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July 1963

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EDITORIAL - CONTROLLING NUCLEAR ENERGY

This title refers to what many would consider the principal problem facing humanity. It has a particular application to our work. Within two years the impact of our world-wide publicity on behalf of "Prisoners of Conscience" has so much reverberated that to some our's now appears to be the principal 'cause' in the world.

We make no such claim ourselves. The elimination of Persecution as a social disease is the next step forward by a civilisation which has already faced up to unemployment, bad housing, malnutrition and epidemic disease. The eradication of state-licensed persecution will take time: when achieved it will be a marked advance towards removing the real causes of Man's ills - his insecurity.

This insecurity, which afflicts all of us to some degree - and those uprooted in urban agglomerations, more than most - accounts for much of our behaviour pattern. It leads some people into bitterness and others into aggression. The recent concern by those who previously were primarily involved in the 'cause' of nuclear disarmament in that of Persecution, is welcomed. Persecution is both due to, and the cause of insecurity: its proper treatment as a social disease will bring the world nearer to removing the cause of war. But a social disease cannot be treated by marches and banners, any more than a plague of flies can be eradicated with tweezers. The answer in both cases is to isolate the putrefaction with the impartial resolution of a dedicated scientist.

P.B.

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF BRITISH GROUPS OF THREE

This was held on the morning of 18th June before the Annual General Meeting in the afternoon.

Groups from all over Britain - and one from Northern Ireland - were represented. One of the most interesting developments reported was that from the University of Manchester: its two representatives announced that their Group had invited all the other university AMNESTY groups and societies to join together in a "University Amnesty Federation". Affirmative replies had so far been received from seven university Groups, and it was proposed to hold the first meeting of the Federation in Manchester in October. In the afternoon the A.G.M. agreed to a resolution which proposed a separate category of student membership, the exact terms of which were to be left until after the establishment of the Federation.

Group representatives from different parts of the country made suggestions about ways of making the Group "adoption" system even more effective. It was generally agreed that all letters to Embassies should be written on good quality notepaper with the name and address of the Group clearly printed at the head. It was also pointed out that any opening letter to an Embassy or Government should refer to the Group's other two adopted prisoners. It was agreed to re-design the membership card in such a way as to make it a credential for any member of a Group deputed to negotiate with an Embassy.

There was an interesting discussion about improved literature for attracting new members and supporters. The Executive Committee are to re-issue an up-to-date leaflet on the lines of "The Barrier of Silence" and a colourful poster with space for over-printing by Groups.

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BRITISH SECTION

The meeting opened with the Chairman reading telegrams of good wishes received from the Danish and Irish Sections. After his opening remarks Lionel Elvin called on Rev. Paul Oestreicher who had just returned to Britain from East and West Germany where he had undertaken a mission on behalf of AMNESTY in connection with certain named prisoners in each country. A brief reference to this journey appears on page three of this Bulletin.

After Peter Benenson had introduced the Annual Report and Neville Vincent the accounts, the meeting proceeded to discuss the resolutions submitted. There was general agreement to the resolution from Chester that there should be more emphasis on provincial activities. During the morning meeting the Groups had made an endeavour to find provincial

* printed copies will be sent to members with the next issue of this Bulletin in September.

representatives to fill their quota of six places on the Executive Committee. The discussion of the financial contribution to be made by the Groups was more controversial, there being two schools of thought - those favouring a single collective affiliation fee and those who wanted a capitation charge of 10s. per Group-member. In the end when the Constitution of the British Section came to be adopted, it was agreed on the Executive's recommendation to omit reference to the financial contribution of the Groups. This matter is to be negotiated between the Executive and each Group on the basis that the Groups will adopt the "quota-system" used by the Student Christian Movement, that is to say, they will inform the Executive of the sum which they calculate they can contribute for the year in advance.

Under the guidance of the Chairman the constitution was adopted clause by clause subject to a resolution presented by the Executive that it should be a provisional document valid for one year in order to give members more time to submit amendments in the light of experience

Shortly after Peter Benenson had given a reply to a member from Devonshire who wanted to know if under any circumstances intervention on behalf of a prisoner could be harmful, Mr. Bent Knudsen, a Danish lawyer and member, arrived from London Airport on return from a mission to Beirut. His arrival just as the meeting was breaking-up reinforced Peter Benenson's point that careful, impartial representations, made with authority and discretion, could only do good; Peter Benenson had emphasised the difference in effect between representations made by a Group or organisation which had established a reputation for impartiality and a deliberately-planned political campaign against a particular regime.

SOME NOTES ON DELEGATES

GERMANY Rev. Paul Oestreicher, an Anglican parson from New Zealand, the son of a German Quaker who emigrated in 1933, went during June to East Berlin and to Bonn. In the latter he was successful in persuading the Minister of Justice of the diplomatic and jurisprudential importance of releasing Dr. Grasnick, editor-in-chief of Deutschlandsender, the East German Radio Station, who had been arrested on a journey to West Germany under the legal fiction that West German laws applied equally to East Germans. Dr. Grasnick was released with 24 hours' of Rev. Paul Oestreicher's visit; he pointed out that he thought that his visit was not the only cause of the release but following numerous protests within Germany "the last straw on the camel's back".

In East Germany, although given a visa and courteously received at lower levels, every Minister had given the excuse of absence from Berlin

NOTES ON DELEGATES cont'd

as a reason for not seeing him. Rev. Paul Oestreicher expressed his regret that the East Germans were less willing to discuss their political prisoners, and pointed out that they had considerably more of them. He thought that there might be a prospect of some being freed on the basis of their being simultaneous releases of Communists in West Germany.

LEBANON Mr. Bent Knudsen is a Danish lawyer with fluent knowledge of French, the language currently spoken in official circles in Lebanon. He spent over a week in Beirut interviewing high judicial officials and lawyers about the position of the 180 members of the P.P.S. now appealing against death sentences and long terms of imprisonment. The decision to send Mr. Knudsen was taken after all the appellants had started a hunger strike and their lawyers had walked out of court as a protest against the tortures being inflicted in prison. Mr. Knudsen was able to report that following the intervention of the heads of the religious communities in the Lebanon the ill-treatment had now ceased. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL has written to several personalities in the Lebanon enclosing Mr. Knudsen's report; and he himself has written a personal letter to President Chehab.

SOUTH AFRICA A London solicitor has recently returned from a mission to South Africa where he collected information about the names of families of prisoners facing destitution. The Relief Department has attended to the situation as best it can, and is passing the information to all other organisations concerned with the relief of hunger in Britain and elsewhere. The solicitor reported that as of 25th June 153 persons were known to have been detained under the 90-day rule, but the number could be higher: no names were published, and the list of 153 could only be compiled from information given by prisoners' friends or family. In addition there were now up to 4,000 'political' prisoners in South Africa arrested on 'holding' charges. Some, it was reported, might be tried under the Sabotage or General Law (Amendment) Act, although in view of the complete congestion of the courts, it was difficult to see how they could be tried within any reasonable period. Others might be released after a period when the authorities found they had not sufficient evidence against them. It is suggested that the practice of arresting White opponents of the regime under the 90-day rule or on a 'holding charge' is part of a design to "squeeze" them out of the country back to Britain; exit permits are readily given to those who will leave. Black and coloured opponents are arrested in a calculated endeavour to intimidate individuals and break the cadres of organisations.

PRISONER OF THE MONTH - U NU OF BURMA

On 2 March 1962, in a surprise move, the Army under General Ne Win seized power in Burma and the revolutionary council which took over the government imprisoned U Nu the Prime Minister, his cabinet, his party leaders and other leading politicians: 47 persons in all were reported to be under heavy military guard at an army camp at Mingaladon.

This brought to a full stop a period of democratic government in Burma and ended U Nu's hopes of bringing internal peace to his country through a federal structure. General Ne Win and his Revolutionary Council now in power stand for a strong central government based on military strength and the repression of civil liberties.

U Nu, a poet, writer and scholar by inclination, was drawn into the nationalist movement in his country from earlier youth. At the outbreak of the Second World War the British imprisoned him because he insisted that Great Britain should give a pledge for Burmese independence after the war: that prison term was brought to an end by the Japanese occupation of Burma. U Nu soon became one of the great leaders of resistance against the Japanese and by the end of the war his standing among his countrymen was such that he was chosen to lead a mission to Britain to negotiate the details of the transfer of sovereignty.

He almost naturally became the first Prime Minister of an independent Union of Burma and led his country with great moral courage and sound political judgment during the first troubled years. He is a Socialist by long-standing conviction and pursued from the start a socialist policy concentrating mainly on the nationalisation of the import trade which was in the hands of a few corrupt merchant families. This, together with his plans for giving partial self-government to the constituent peoples of the Union, earned him the accusation of going communist. Nothing could be further from the truth: U Nu always opposed Communism in favour of stronger links with the Western democracies. He encouraged a strong Buddhist revival which also militated against Communism. In the 1960 elections not a single Communist candidate was returned to Parliament.

What happened to U Nu since March 1962? There is very little we know except that he has not regained his freedom. A few months after his arrest the Revolutionary Council put out a declaration to the effect that "it was not intended to put the detained leaders on trial". No charges have ever been preferred against him or any of the other leaders imprisoned with him. On 1 April 1963 a general amnesty was announced in Rangoon, but U Nu was expressly excluded from benefiting by it. According to the latest information he is now "under house arrest and well cared for" - but it is still not intended either to put him on trial or to release him. This means that he may well spend the rest of his life in confinement unless public opinion is mobilized in his favour, bringing pressure to bear upon the present rulers of Burma.

Appeals for clemency should be sent to: General Ne Win, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, Rangoon, Union of Burma.

THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING

14.00 hrs. FRIDAY 20th SEPTEMBER - 13.00 hrs. SUNDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER.

at the Adam Stegler Haus, Königswinter, near Bonn, West Germany.

Although accommodation in the building is limited to the two representatives invited from each National Section, there are numerous hotels of different categories in Königswinter, an attractive town on the Rhine. Members of the movement who wish to attend as Observers may do so on registration by post with AMNISTIE-APPELL, the organisers, at 185 Goltsteinstrasse, Köln. Members from Britain or Ireland who wish to start their journey from London are invited to obtain information from the office at 1 Mitre Court Buildings, Temple, London, E.C.4 about Group travel plans. If more than 10 people wish to travel by train to and from Köln, the second class cost will be only £9.10.0 inclusive (those preferring first class may pay supplements). The train leaves London at 23.00 on Thursday 19th September and returns at 06.50 on Monday morning, 23rd September.

THE AGENDA - Pressure on the judicial system in political cases (a consideration of some leading cases from democratic countries which have made recent news).

- Developments in the realm of Personal Freedom in the Developing Countries.

- Developments in the realm of Personal Freedom in the Marxist/Leninist Countries.

- Future policy and development of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (with particular reference to an extension of the CODE OF CONDUCT to deal with prisoners victimised on account of their race, and the attitude of the movement towards political prisoners who are not "Prisoners of Conscience").

RELIEF DEPARTMENT

"War on Want" has agreed to assist THREES with excessive postage for parcels sent by THREES to prisoners and their families. If you have any receipts please send them to the London Office, Relief Department, which will apply for the refund of your expenses.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IN FRANCE

There still remain over 100 conscientious objectors in France today. Many are still in prison serving sentences which range from 18 months to two years.

In June 1962 Louis Lecoin, aged 74, editor of the pacifist journal "Liberté" went on a hunger strike on behalf of the imprisoned conscientious objectors. He ended his hunger strike upon hearing that the Government had decided to assemble all conscientious objectors in a camp in the Dordogne where each according to his capacity would be employed in civilian work. This was obviously just a temporary measure until a statute could be formulated. But in spite of this decision the imprisonment of conscientious objectors has continued.

Although the maximum sentence previously imposed was two years, in Spring 1963, a French soldier, Michel Boujert, was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for refusing military service in Algeria after serving several months in the army. This was an unusually heavy sentence, and according to 'War Resisters' International' this was most likely because Boujert had deserted from the army. He was only one amongst many who refused to serve in Algeria on moral grounds.

Many Frenchmen refuse to carry arms on religious grounds and the cases of Philippe Giradet, a Protestant student, and Jean Francois Bresson, a Catholic teacher, are representative. They were both engaged in voluntary work for the homeless at the time of their arrest; several prominent churchmen were present at their trial proclaiming solidarity with these two young men. The tribunal pronounced sentences on both, 18 months for each of these delinquents. Such is the unhappy situation for (these) Prisoners of Conscience in France.

On June 3rd, 1963, a plan introducing the statute was approved by the Government. According to Mr. Peyrefitte, Minister of Information, it was necessary to find a solution which would conciliate the two following principles:

- 1) That all citizens must accept responsibility in defence of their country in time of need.
- 2) Respect of the authorities towards those persons who because of their convictions are opposed to carrying arms.

A commission therefore is to be set up to study each case and, if his views are accepted as genuine by the commission, he will either be sent into a non-combattant unit of the army or directed into civilian work.

Louis Lecoin and his courageous friends have not struggled in vain.

Releases of adopted prisoners during June:

Czechoslovakia 6 (Manchester University 2; Liverpool 4)
 Greece 1 (Exeter)
 Hungary 3 (William Temple; Dublin; Motherwell)
 Iraq 1 (York University)
 Poland 1 (London School of Economics)
 Spain 1 (Eltham)
 U.S.A. 2 (Santa Paula, California; Bristol University) Total - 15.

THREES IN THE U.K.

CHESTER Spain - replies have been received from the embassy including the Minister of Information and Tourism on four separate occasions, but a request to discuss their prisoner with the Spanish Ambassador in London in a personal interview was refused. Their contact for Spain was found to provide a good deal of help. This active group correspond with many other THREES, thereby gaining knowledge of procedure and in return advise others.

BIRMINGHAM GUILD OF UNDERGRADUATES is one of much promise and activity. Already one of their members has declared himself willing to combine a holiday in Portugal with some investigations on behalf of their prisoner and any other matters H.Q. may advise him to undertake.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON In this cosmopolitan college students travel to all parts of the world, and offers have come to us from those going to Singapore, Russia, S. Spain, Israel and Italy.

EXETER This group produce their own stencilled reports, reproducing replies received from contacts and also commenting on matters of general interest to AMNESTY supporters.

THREES ABROAD

ITALY This enterprising section - the headquarters of which are in Genoa - has grown impressively. Its founder has put in a tremendous amount of work, translating all existing literature into Italian, as well as preparing formulæ for letters to foreign authorities and families into the appropriate languages.

FUND RAISING

OXTED are manufacturing 'AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL' ball pens at 1s. a piece, to be sold to anyone who wishes to purchase them. They will soon be available.

BELFAST are making arrangements for an AMNESTY Christmas card for N. Ireland.

QUINTON, BIRMINGHAM held a very successful coffee morning, sending us £20, this being half the proceeds.

NEW THREES

Cologne, Germany; Battersea College, London; Frensham Heights School (as a result of a talk given by Mr. Ken Cottman of Guildford Group); Ealing, London; Fellowship of Reconciliation, London; Jewish Students, London; Christian Action, Leytonstone; Wembley 'Under 35's', Middlesex; Aylesford, Kent; Halstead, Essex.

PARCELS FOR PRISONERS - see page six of this Bulletin.