Religious persecution, regardless of faith or creed, was condemned jointly by representatives of the main faiths at a Conference held in Paris on Wednesday, June 20th. Speakers for the leading religions represented in France gave their united condemnation after hearing details of five representative cases of religious persecution from all parts of the world.

This was the first occasion when leaders of different faiths had combined to expose and condemn intolerance not only against adherents of their own faiths but of all other religions. M. le Pasteur Westphal, welcoming the Conference, said it was a fitting prelude to the Ecumenical Conference called by Pope John for next year, and hoped that it might lead to the day when the faiths of the world would agree on a common standard of religious tolerance.

The Conference opened with a statement by Peter Benenson on the aims of Amnesty '61. Plans for a similar campaign in France were outlined by Maitre Nicolas Jacob, Joint Director of the French National Section. These statements were followed by details of representative cases of religious persecution, each presented by a compatriot of the imprisoned minister.

The cases brought to the attention of the Conference were:

- The Catholic Archbishop Beran of Prague, Czechoslovakia;
- The Catholic Archbishop Pinto de Andrade, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Luanda, Angola;
- The Baptist-Protestant Pastor Alfonso Navarro of Melilla, Spain;
- The Catholic Reverend Alejandro Bello of San Domingo; and The Buddhist Abbot Pen Hua of Nanhua Monastery, Kwantung, China.

Religious leaders taking part in the Conference were M. le Pasteur Westphal, elected leader of the Protestant Churches of France, who stressed that the question of religious persecution was already being considered jointly by the Churches of the Reform and Orthodox Churches; Pere Faidherbe, Chaplain-General to the Associations of French Catholic Lawyers, representing Cardinal Feltin, Archbishop of Paris and Primate of France; Maitre Joas Sportiche, a member of the Consistory Court, nominated by Grand Rabbi Kaplan of France; and Pere Riquet, Preacher of Notre Dame, Paris, 1946-1953.

Since Amnesty '61 commemorates, among other events of 1861, the death of Lacordaire, the great Liberal Dominican preacher, the presence of Pere Faidherbe, a Dominican, as Catholic spokesman, and Pere Riquet, whose appointment itself commemorates the tradition of Notre Dame sermons founded by Lacordaire, was particularly appropriate.

In the chair was Mme. Helene Jeanty-Raven, a heroine of the Belgian Resistance and now the wife of Canon C. E. Raven, the well-known Cambridge theologian. Mme. Jeanty-Raven stressed that Amnesty '61 was a spontaneous movement, unconnected with any other organisation or government, non-political, non-denominational, international and impartial.

This Amnesty conference closed with an appeal to the French people by M. Martin Chauffier, who urged enthusiastic support for this new movement in defence of freedom.
Comment

As the first issue of AMNESTY goes to press the daily newspapers carry reports of further political arrests in Portugal. There is nothing remarkable about this coincidence: the situation of all countries under dictatorship or domination by State security groups has become a pattern of our day. Such action is indicative of weakness, not strength: the strong have nothing to fear from the honest expression of beliefs, political or religious.

Those who fling people into prison for presuming to differ do so because the truth that they live and accept no longer be topped from their precarious positions of power and privilege.

We have not the slightest intention of dabbling in the domestic affairs of other nations. We are concerned only with the basic human right of any man or woman to give visual or vocal expression to sincerely held beliefs. But when this right is infringed then we shall strive to mobilise world opinion to release those—many of them—privilege.

I very much hope that one result of "Anglicans, like other Christians, are conscious of being on the defensive, and the ministry of the Church, as well as the duty which it implies can no longer be an easy habit of conformism." I do not believe this to be the case. Christianity is not on the defensive, but on the offensive. The Occasional Movement of this Paris Conference may well be the upsurge of the spirit which rises into the sky in a great column which over-towers even the Nucleus of 'mustard'. This Paris Conference on Religious Persecution, coming before the meeting of the Protestant Council next year, shows that the faiths of the world have the will to work together. And with one Church speaking for the other, as in Paris on 20th June 1961, we shall succeed in finding not just the lowest common denominator, but the highest common factor—the revealed truth.

THE PERSECUTION

Of PROTESTANTS

In this article PETER BENENSON, a Joint Director of Appeal for Amnesty 1961, reports and comments on that part of the Paris Conference which referred to the persecution of Protestants. The next issue of AMNESTY will contain an article on the persecution of Roman Catholics written by ERIC BAKER, the other Joint Director of Appeal for Amnesty 1961.

The emphasis in this first issue of "Anglicans, like other Christians, are conscious of being on the defensive, and the ministry of the Church, as well as the duty which it implies can no longer be an easy habit of conformism." I do not believe this to be the case. Christianity is not on the defensive, but on the offensive. The Occasional Movement of this Paris Conference may well be the upsurge of the spirit which rises into the sky in a great column which over-towers even the Nucleus of 'mustard'. This Paris Conference on Religious Persecution, coming before the meeting of the Protestant Council next year, shows that the faiths of the world have the will to work together. And with one Church speaking for the other, as in Paris on 20th June 1961, we shall succeed in finding not just the lowest common denominator, but the highest common factor—the revealed truth.

CORRESPONDENCE

Amnesty's International Headquarters is at 1, Mitre Court Buildings, Temple, London, E.C.4. United Kingdom. Tel. CADogan 867/9429.

The address of a National Section (where these do not yet exist, of those trying to form them) will be sent on application to the International Headquarters. To save time: General Correspondence must be addressed as AMNESTY '61; Letters relating to the International Appeal to Artists (to paint one picture on the theme "Out of the Darkness, light") should be pre-fixed "Art and Conscience".

At AMNESTY Paris Conference Catholic Leader condemns
THE TASKS OF AMNESTY '61

It is estimated that several million people are today in prison for no reason except that they have given expression to opinions or religious beliefs which are unacceptable to their respective governments. Among these governments are member States of the United Nations which in 1945 approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The governments which are today flagrantly disregarding these rights and the U.N. Declaration made to protect them are by no means all behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains.

At the instigation of Peter Benchenson, a London lawyer, Appeal for Amnesty 1961 has been started as a world movement to urge governments by force of public opinion to release their political and religious prisoners or at least to give them a fair trial. Its most important task is to mobilise public opinion quickly and widely before a government is caught up in the vicious spiral caused by its own repression and becomes faced with impending civil war.

One way of doing this is by a series of public conferences held in different countries where people can be confronted with first-hand evidence. Two such conferences have now been held: one in London to focus attention on political prisoners, and one in Paris to focus attention on religious persecution. The greater part of this first issue of Amnesty is devoted to reports of this second conference.

The majority of people are unquestionably disgusted by almost daily reports of repression by one government or another. But only an infinitesimal proportion of them can attend public meetings like the London and Paris conferences, so they must be reached by means of the printed word. And that is the reason for this fortnightly newspaper. The quicker its circulation is increased the quicker will be the effect of world opinion on the repressive tendencies of governments.

As the first of our readers you are asked most earnestly to commend Amnesty, and the organisation which publishes it, to men and women of conscience and compassion.

We ask that those of you who did not read the Observer article on this new world movement should write to the Appeal for Amnesty 1961, 1 Mitre Court Buildings, London, E.C.4. for the text of this article which has been printed in booklet form and is available for the price of 1/3d. incl. postage or 11/- per doz.

The price of AMNESTY

AMNESTY is available by subscription, and will not be placed on open-sale. Its cost is £1 1s. 0d. (post free) for the 6 months ending 31st December 1961. Separate issues may be purchased in bulk by supporting organisations for distribution among members at reduced rates. These will be quoted upon application.

Approximately the same price will be charged in all countries. British and West European readers should please bear in mind that the price they pay helps to defray the heavy air-charges to Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

In those countries where NATIONAL SECTIONS of AMNESTY 61 have been formed, subscriptions should be paid to the Section. Elsewhere, if transfer of currency to the United Kingdom is permitted, by cash, cheque or other credit to CO State Department for Amnesty 1961, 1 Mitre Court Buildings, Temple, London, E.C.4. Where transfer is impossible, subscribers are asked to write for special instructions as to the cause to which they should devote their subscriptions.

Footnote. Subscriptions in U.S.A. and Canada until 31st Dec 1961 are 3 dollars, in France 1500 francs, in Germany 26 D.M., in Italy 2000 lire. IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY SUBSCRIBED TO THIS BULLETIN YOU WILL BE SENT THIS AND 3 MORE COPIES WITHOUT CHARGE.

ARRESTS IN PORTUGAL

News has reached AMNESTY '61 from various sources that Dr. Gouveia, Dr. Soares, and Dr. Sormенho, leading Portuguese lawyers, have recently been arrested in connection with the publication of a leaflet claiming the 'democratisation of the Republic'. In addition, news has come of Dr. Arnaldo Veiga-Pires, the 70-year old Professor of Medicine at Oporto. He has been arrested and taken to Adjube Prison, Lisbon.

The Joint Directors of AMNESTY '61 wrote to the Portuguese Ambassador two separate letters two weeks ago, asking for information to enable them to decide whether these men should be classified as PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE. No reply whatsoever has been received. On the strength of the information supplied by the relatives, and by British journalists who have known and interviewed some of the men, it has been provisionally decided to classify them as 'Prisoners of Conscience'. Their names are being issued to groups of THREE, to start campaigning for their release.

In all such cases AMNESTY '61 will write to the Embassy concerned, and will give sufficient time for the Embassy to reply, and space for the kernel of their answer to be published. Where Embassies fail to acknowledge or reply to letters, this fact will also be published.

See Comment on page 2.