

# AMNESTY NEWS

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## AMNESTY INVESTIGATES

By the end of February; with the help of newspaper and other financial backing, Amnesty will have sent out three 'investigators' to three different countries, in an endeavour to find out the real plight of prisoners about whom we have records.

Early in January, Louis Blom-Cooper, with generous help from 'The Guardian', went to Ghana. He was able to see the Minister of the Interior and obtain a first-hand impression of the situation. The other investigators are going to Czechoslovakia and Portugal. Full reports will, it is hoped, appear in the Amnesty Quarterly in April.

Amnesty was also able to arrange for Audrey Sander to join the defence counsel of Father Davezies, a French priest who was tried by a military tribunal in Paris in January for helping FLN supporters to escape imprisonment and torture. The court condemned Father Davezies to three years' imprisonment and a fine, but the presence of a British lawyer greatly encouraged those people in France who feel they are fighting a lone battle for freedom and justice in the midst of present difficulties. In particular the arrival of a woman barrister, in wig and gown (wigs are not worn in France), added welcome publicity to the trial, which in itself may have contributed to a lighter sentence than would otherwise have been the case.

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### STOP PRESS:

Sean MacBride came back from Czechoslovakia on February 4th. As a result of his efforts the plight of Archbishop Beran at least may be improved. For a full report of this investigation see the Amnesty Quarterly.

## INTERNATIONAL SECTIONS GROW

Peter Benenson went to Holland in January to attend the second meeting of the newly-constituted Dutch section. This consists of a group of leading figures in the country, professors, lawyers and editors. It is proposed to appeal for a general membership and for funds after one more committee meeting. The person responsible for taking the initiative in forming the section is Elka Schrijver, who was one of the first to join the Dutch Resistance movement, and who spent most of the war in prison.

Before going to Holland, Peter Benenson made a quick tour of some of the Amnesty groups in Western Europe. In Geneva he attended a committee meeting; and in Germany he had discussions with the joint organisers of the National Section, Gerd Ruge and Carola Stern. Between the two he paid a visit to Milan, where another supporter, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, the publisher, has agreed to call a meeting of writers and lawyers in April to coincide with Peter Benenson's next visit.

In Belgium, he spent a most useful evening with the joint organisers of the National Section: Louis Kiebooms, M.P., and Dr. Herman Todts. The Belgian Section undertook to organise the next International Meeting of Amnesty organisers, probably on the 22/23rd. September. It is hoped that Amnesty supporters who happen to be in or near Belgium at that time will attend the public part of the discussions.

In Australia, supporters seem to have overcome the difficulties of distance successfully by building regional organisations. An excellent report of progress was received from Sydney during January. Arrangements are also being made to form sections in Norway, Sweden and Israel.

Finally, Amnesty can report increasing interest from the Communist countries. While the establishment of National Sections in Eastern Europe may not yet be practicable, the possibility of individual citizens feeling free to participate in international activities is not to be excluded. The attitude of the movement on this point is quite clear; Amnesty has no politics; we are prepared to accept as a member anyone who sincerely undertakes to safeguard the rights of opinion and religion of those with whom he may disagree.

## WANTED - MORE HELP FOR THREES

Help is needed in forming more Threes. We are still very short of people (whether in this country or abroad) who are willing to work for the release of prisoners and for the relief of their families. This is a practical way of helping Amnesty.

One of the most successful Threes has been formed at Oxford University. There is an Amnesty representative in almost every College. Miss Margery Perham is the Senior Member and all those interested have been issued with an attractive membership card designed by the students. The Secretary is Miss Bridget Marsh, Lady Margaret Hall. The Oxford Three has recently asked for another eight sets of prisoners. Two London groups - the North London and Howard groups - have been able to report the release of one prisoner each.

Amnesty supporters have written in from the following places saying they would like to start groups: South Kensington (London); Guildford (Surrey); Falmouth (Cornwall) and Northern Ireland. Anybody wishing to help should write to central office, and they will be put in touch with the organisers.

The following gives details of three Prisoners of Conscience for whom a Three could work.

ERICH LOEST, Leipzig, East Germany, a novelist whose three books have achieved great success in the Eastern countries. He was arrested in 1957 in Leipzig and was sentenced in 1958 in a secret trial by the District Court of Halle to 8 years penal servitude for incitement and "forming hostile groups".

FRANCISCO MENDES TENGARRINHA, Portugal, is the Chief Editor of the daily paper "Diario Illustrado" and was arrested in December 1961 for activities "against state security".

ALICE KOOMSON, Ghana, is a Market Women Representative of Sekondi/Takoradi and was arrested on October 3rd, 1961, under the Preventive Detention Order 1961.

## 'PERSONAL FREEDOM IN THE EMERGENT COUNTRIES'

Representatives from the Ghana and Sudan Governments, as well as those from other countries and organisations interested in the work of Amnesty, were among 100 people who attended Amnesty's first conference - 'Personal Freedom in the Emergent Countries' - in London on January 27th. During the morning session, presided over by Gerald Gardiner, Q.C., Dr. Anthony Allott, Reader in African Law at London University, tackled the fundamental question of 'Principles of Personal Freedom' in an address which was remarkable for its lucidity and range. Many of the points raised at this session were explored in greater detail in the afternoon, when Louis Blom-Cooper, London lawyer and journalist, described his recent investigations in Ghana, and Peter Kilner, former 'Times' correspondent in Khartoum, outlined the present situation in the Sudan against a background of that country's social, religious and political history.

Professor Stanley de Smith, Professor of Public Law, L.S.E., made a concise summing-up of the day's discussions, and the conference closed with two brief addresses, from Eric Baker and Peter Benenson, emphasising the underlying purpose, not only of the conference, but of Amnesty - which is to try to relieve human suffering wherever it occurs, in whatever country, anywhere in the world,

Although this first conference had, of necessity, considering the size and complexity of the African scene, to be restricted to two representative "emergent" countries, opinion on the whole was that it had served a very useful purpose, not least of providing an occasion when Amnesty friends and supporters could meet and exchange their, at times, different views. Certainly it was an encouraging basis on which to plan the two future conferences.

(Reports on conditions in Ghana and the Sudan will appear in the Amnesty Quarterly)

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Membership Appeal: - Over 130 members have renewed their subscription for 1962. But we need many more. Please either renew your subscription or bring in a new member - preferably both!