

"EUSTOMY"

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Published by the International Secretariat: 1, Mitre Court Buildings, Temple, London, E.C.4.

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PREFACE The purpose of this publication is to keep National Sections of the AMNESTY movement, and their supporters, in touch with the work being done by the International Secretariat.

The International Secretariat is situated in London; it consists of an office staff of 3, that is to say the Secretary; his Personal Assistant, Martin Enthoven, who has newly joined the staff after a 3-year journey round the world; and a shorthand-typist. In addition the Secretariat comprises the Library, which keeps up the records of all known "Prisoners of Conscience"; and the Research Bureau, which prepares information about countries where the Prisoners are held and generally advises Groups how to go about the release of their adopted Prisoners. Mrs. Christel Marsh, the original Librarian, supervises both these departments, and is responsible for the delicate task of choosing the Prisoners allocated to Groups for adoption.

The size and format of this publication should not be taken as an indication of the amount of work done by the Secretariat, only of its limited financial resources and its order of priority in spending them. The title "Eustomy" may cause puzzlement - it is meant to! The word is Greek; those familiar with classical literature will recognise that it has a double meaning - "speaking auspicious words" and "keeping silence to avoid words of ill omen".

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EXTRACTS FROM A REPORT ON CONDITIONS IN BAGHDAD
by Leslie Hale M.P.

Mr. Hale, a British M.P., for long interested in prison conditions, eventually received permission to visit the Central prison in Baghdad. While in Iraq Mr. Hale made a number of enquiries on behalf of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL.

"I had been given the very high figure of 160,000 as the number of possible arrests. Certainly all the evidence is that every prison was overcrowded, that the National Guard took over buildings, including one of King Faisal's palaces, as improvised places of detention and that concentration camps were in use. In the Rachid prison, not far outside Baghdad, but in something like desert conditions, military stores were used for confinement, and in a series of approximately 14 stores there were approximately 1,000 people confined in each. The state of overcrowding can be judged by the fact that when I inspected the women's central prison in Baghdad there was bitter complaint about overcrowding. 98 women were lodged in 6 substantial rooms accompanied by 20 children, although it was conceded that a few months previously 300 women had been accommodated in the same premises, and one well-informed witness put the highest figure at 500.

The National Guard, in the main, arrested people for one or other of the following reasons.

1. That they were suspected Communists.
2. That they were related to suspected Communists.
3. That they were rich people who could be black-mailed into making payments for release.
4. That they were people whom some member of the National Guard did not like.

There was a more limited number of arrests of attractive girls to use by the National Guard for sexual connection. Of 300 girls reported released at the time of the November Revolution from one section, it was said that 60 were then pregnant, and that 10 of them had committed suicide rather than face the wrath of their strict Moslem parents.

One of the methods of torture commonly used for the girls was to swing them from a rope, normally tied round the waist, and with the hands tied behind the back, pull them up on to a hook in the roof and leave them swinging for a period. It will be seen in the statement of Miss A., who was certainly not anxious to say these things, that this was done to her on 3 nights running; and I interviewed a number of witnesses who had seen this practice or who had suffered under it. These witnesses also confirmed that beating up was a regular practice, and witnesses said that they had seen men brought back in an almost dying condition after an hour or two's torture. Miss A. said that she had seen a considerable number of her fellow prisoners die as a result of the violence. One method was to send for a prisoner and tell him that he was about to be released, and while he was rejoicing at his fortune start to beat him up and indulge in perversion and abominable perversion."

Mr. Hale writes about his visit to the Central Prison.

".....The sleeping quarters were dreadfully overcrowded, very few had real beds, blankets were laid on the concrete floor in unhealthy conditions and in circumstances of great overcrowding. The cooking facilities appeared to us to be extremely primitive, though they correspond very closely to the conditions I had in 1939 when I joined the army and when we used the old rusty metal cookers of the first war. What looked like tolerable meat and vegetables were being cooked in enormous iron pots, but I saw no canteen facilities and the serving of the food must be of a somewhat primitive nature. The great difficulty, of course, in a society like this is to compare the conditions in the prison with outside conditions. The poorer prisoners would, no doubt, be as well off in prison, but for the lack of freedom as those outside, but on the other hand the upper bourgeoisie enjoy a very high degree of luxury accommodation and for them the contrast would be almost unbearable. There was not, in the Central Prison, whilst the Director was there the slightest sign of cruelty or of prisoners being inhibited.

.....A young medical officer was visiting the children at the time we were there. I was told that 6 prisoners were due for release that day, and it certainly is true that since the November Revolution three commissions have been set up ostensibly to go through the cases of detention or imprisonment without trial and to make recommendations for release where, to quote the phrase actually used 'the innocence of the accused becomes established'."

CLOSING OF SYNAGOGUES IN U.S.S.R.

During the autumn of 1963 the library of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL made a detailed study of cases where Soviet citizens had been executed for economic offences. It is generally known that a high proportion of those condemned to death have been Jews. In an endeavour to obtain more accurate information as to whether there was any calculated anti-Semitism in a choice of persons prosecuted, convicted or executed for economic offences the International Secretariat called a private meeting of experts in Soviet affairs which was held in London on the 2nd December.

Minutes of the discussion were taken since a number of useful points were made and many interesting facts were disclosed. The International Secretariat, however, does not feel that the information justifies it in taking any stand at the present time in relation to those convicted for economic offences, particularly in view of the fact that the scope of the AMNESTY movement does not generally cover "economic offences". However, information given at the private meeting did disclose that there was a concerted policy in the Soviet Union designed to close down synagogues. In the year 1956 the Soviet Government submitted information to the United Nations stating that the number of synagogues was 450. According to a recent statement in an English language Soviet journal quoting the Chief Rabbi of the Central Synagogue in Moscow and a recent English language broadcast on Radio Moscow the figure in 1963 has been reduced to about 100. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL has received a list giving details of the closure of 72 synagogues in different parts of the Soviet Union during the years 1959-62. I think the question of making representations to the Soviet Government is now under consideration.

EXTRACTS FROM LAKSHMAN KADIRGAMAR'S REPORT ON VIET-NAM

Mr. L. Kadirgamar, LL.B., B. Litt., Barrister-at-Law, is the organiser of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL in Ceylon.

CONCLUSIONS. I would not have been surprised to find nothing but bitterness and hatred between the Catholic and Buddhist peoples of South Viet-Nam. It would have been natural perhaps to find the desire for vengeance in the aftermath of liberation. But I found none of this. Everywhere there was a reluctance to speak of the past and not because the people had any fear of exposure or punishment in a country which has now been freed from the brutality of the Diem regime. The Press, after years of censorship, is at last free to publish what it likes, to express all its pent up emotion. But I found that the Press has deliberately eschewed sensationalism. While the pressmen will tell you that they have heard many salacious stories about the private life of Madame Nhu they have not the slightest interest in publishing them and there is a tacit understanding among the newspapers not to print pictures showing the cruelty of the Diem regime. Young students freed again after months of imprisonment and torture might have been expected to run wild. But I found them quiet and sober, suddenly mature perhaps, and it was difficult to extract from them the details of atrocities perpetrated by the former regime. They kept saying that the past is best forgotten, that there is no point in dwelling on the misery of the last six months. They were concerned only with the future. I met leading monks, professors, teachers, students, professional people, men and women, young and old and not one single person was keen to glory in his or her martyrdom.

During the entirety of the campaign waged by the Buddhists there was never at any stage in any form whatsoever the manifestation of an intention to repress or persecute the adherents of any other religious faith. What appeared to me to be almost miraculous in that the mass of the people who were engaged in this struggle and who suffered for their cause were able always to define their goals with scrupulous objectivity. Their fight was against the Diem regime, against the personal autocracy of a powerful family. Their fight was for the elevation of the Buddhist faith, not the denigration of any other peoples or faiths. During the campaign for liberation not one anti-catholic slogan was raised or published by the Buddhist leaders. I was not told, and I did not come to hear, of a single incident involving Buddhists or Catholics. The truth appears to be that the majority of the respective leaders worked in harmony for the common cause. With the exception of Archbishop Thuc, the notorious brother of Diem, and his small coterie of followers, there were (to quote what General Minh told me) "many gestures of sympathy from the Catholics towards the Buddhists. The messages of Pope Paul VI to the Vietnamese people and the two pastoral letters from the Archbishop of Saigon, Monseigneur Nguyen Van Binh are the most important manifestations of their sympathy".

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The Venerable Thich Duc Nghiep of the Xa Loi pagoda, spokesman for the Inter-Sect Committee which was established during the campaign to co-ordinate the activities of the various sects, told me: "The Buddhist protest was against Diem's regime and family. There was no ill feeling against our Catholic brothers. They showed sympathy with us". The Venerable Nghiep spent seventy-two days in gaol. I was told by students that he had been severely tortured but although I met him on two occasions and urged him to speak out the past he steadfastly refused. He said in his flawless English, that "the last few months were a nightmare. It is past; there is no necessity to speak about it now"...

The Venerable Thich Tam Chau, Chairman of the Inter-Sect Committee for the Defence of Buddhism in South Viet-Nam, the monk who along with the Venerable Thich Khiet and the Venerable Thich Tri Quang successfully led the organised revolt against Diem and paved the way for his downfall, has now retired to the peace and quiet of his tiny little room in a wing of the Xa Loi pagoda where he sleeps on a plank bed. He is a gentle man utterly devoid of vanity or arrogance, uncorrupted by the devotion which he has inspired among his followers.....

To all those heroic men and women, to Dr. Quyen, Fr. Luan and the many students who will forever remain anonymous, I would like to pay my own humble tribute. I feel that the memory of their achievements cannot be allowed to fade without it being brought to the notice of the world that men of such calibre and integrity are still amongst us. They have shown that once men and women unite across the divide of belief and allegiance no tyranny can survive.

The full report, which is of great interest, runs to 5,000 words.

DELEGATES' MISSIONS

MOROCCO: Maitre Nicolas Jacob, organiser of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL's French Section attended the opening of the trial of the UNFP leaders at Rabat, Morocco on 29th November 1963. After 4 days the trial was adjourned for a preliminary submission to be decided by the Supreme Court. The trial resumed on 26th December. Maitre Jacob returned on 4th January and attended the court for the next 8 days. A summary of his report will shortly be published. This is an important political trial involving allegations of torture and the threat of the death penalty.

SPAIN: Hugh O'Shaughnessy left for a tour of Spain at the beginning of January. Neville Vincent and Peter Benenson had an "off the record" discussion with Senor Fraga, Minister of Information, when he was in London in November; the subject under discussion was conditions of prisoners and their families. Senor Fraga undertook to make enquiries about certain points.

CENTRAL AFRICA: Commander Cunningham, AMNESTY's "Asylum-Counsellor" has been centred in Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia, since 7th November. His reports about the problems of refugees have been circulated to the organisations taking the financial responsibility for their relief.

PORTUGAL: Lord Gardiner (Gerald Gardiner Q.C.) was refused permission to inspect the political prisons in Portugal on AMNESTY's behalf; although Lord Russell of Liverpool, who had been invited by a public relations firm acting on behalf of the Portuguese Government, had been given facilities in the spring of 1963.

LEBANON: Mr. Windsor Clark made representations about members of the PPS whose death sentence had been confirmed by the Appeal Court, when visiting Beirut in December.

SOVIET UNION: An application by Peter Archer, British barrister, author of a book on Soviet Law, to attend a trial of Jews for large-scale economic offences has not been answered after 4 weeks. In the meantime a report has been received that the trial started behind closed doors at the beginning of January.

SPACE PRECLUDES FULLER MENTION OF THE SECRETARIAT'S ACTIVITIES; FINANCE STILL LIMITS BOTH THE ACTIVITIES AND THE SIZE OF THIS PUBLICATION.

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