

EUSTOMY

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FROM RUMANIA . . . TO RIVONIA

"Arrests make news, releases do not" is a motto in every newspaper office. But when Rumania liberates several thousand political prisoners, with the promise of emptying the country's jails by August, this newspaper should at least give the story emphasis. Three years ago when the Amnesty movement began there were many who scoffed at the idea of private protests making any impression on firmly established one-party states. It is true that the Rumanian leaders have tacked several points in the wind to keep a course mid-way between Russia and Yugoslavia, but mass-releases were no part of Tito's original stand against Stalin. In Yugoslavia it was not until 1963 that there was a clear determination to empty the political prisons, and this year has seen the establishment of an "amnesty commission" to carry out a review of all outstanding political cases.

The decision to release those known to the Amnesty movement as "Prisoners of Conscience" is not an isolated development in the Marxist third of the world. Parallel with the welcome news from Rumania is the action of the Papandreou government in Greece in releasing almost all of the former Civil War prisoners and all of those subsequently charged with political offences. Nasser has not yet completely redeemed his promise to release all political prisoners by the end of 1963, but he has made long strides in the right direction. In Spain, despite a rather petty running-battle between the police and groups of extreme opponents of the regime, a degree of latitude is now allowed to the democratic groupings which would have been unthinkable in the last twenty-five years.

In the "Third World", too, there have been more hopeful signs. General Ne Win has at last started on the process of release in Burma. The overthrow of the odious Diem regime in Viet-Nam was an indication of world-wide horror at its practices of arbitrary imprisonment and assassination. While the right-wing revolution in Brazil has brought a number of arrests, and some prominent opponents have gone into exile, it must be admitted that the scale of repression has been notably less harsh than that which used to accompany a Latin American counter-revolution.

Growth of Racial Conflicts

How far can the Amnesty movement claim that the persistent efforts of its 350 adoption-groups have produced this change of political climate? Was it because the photograph of Anneliese Brandt lighting the Amnesty Candle on Human Rights Day was flashed around the world that Heinz

Brandt, 1963 "Prisoner of Conscience of the Year" was released? These are speculations which only historians can resolve. Suffice it to note that there has been some coincidence between the growth of this movement dedicated to the release of "Prisoners of Conscience" and the realisation of our objective.

To record this coincidence without noting a new and frightening development would be ingenuous. While the ideological tensions of the Cold War have been replaced by the rivalry between Russia and China on one side and that between U.S.A. and France on the other, a fresh crisis has developed. The animosity of racial groups is not confined to those of different colour; religious differences are enough to spark off violence in Cyprus, while linguistic problems are threatening the unity of such peaceful democratic states as Belgium and Canada. These racial tensions present AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL with a fresh challenge.

Those who advocate the predominance of their own ethnic group in any given area, whether in British Guiana or in South Africa, are not prepared to confine themselves to dialectics. Racial domination is not a political policy; it is an emotional reaction which leads almost inescapably to violence.

The Challenge of Violence

We in the Amnesty movement are not prepared to countenance violent methods to achieve political ends. Are we to condone violence to permit one race to evict another? Surely the answer is *No*. But can we as a young, struggling international organisation dedicated to the principle of political and religious freedom, effectively bring about *racial tolerance*? What we set out to do was practicable; events have proved so. If we are to

undertake a fresh objective, it must be with the consent of our members and supporters in all the many countries where the Amnesty idea has taken root. However urgent and desirable the new objective, there is no use in our thinking that we make any effective contribution to solving racial tensions simply by restating the cause of non-violence. Today, between the races the gloves are off and the fight is on.

Because of the challenge of changed circumstances we make a special appeal to all our supporters to contribute, if they can, to our International Assembly in Canterbury on 26th and 27th September. Limitations of space require priority to be given to those coming from overseas, but personal presence is not a pre-requisite to participation. Every supporter is invited to send in writing to the International Secretariat his views on the issues raised by the following questions, and a synthesis of the replies will be laid before the International Assembly.

1. Should AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL seek the release from imprisonment of those who use violent methods in support of the objects of their racial group? If so, in what circumstances?
2. Is there any practicable method which can be adopted within the framework of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL to mitigate the suffering caused by racial intolerance?

Replies must be received by September 1st. They may be written in any language. Tyewritten replies would be appreciated.

PETER BENENSON

INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY CANTERBURY

26th and 27th September, 1964

at the

COUNTY HOTEL

The Assembly opens at 3 p.m. on Saturday and closes at 4 p.m. on Sunday. There will be special arrangements for sight-seeing before and after the Assembly. Two representatives from each country will be accommodated without charge. Others attending will be asked to pay:

£2.10.0 (Board and lodging at the County Hotel from Saturday morning to Sunday afternoon); or

£1.10.0 (Attendance at the Assembly, including tea and dinner on Saturday, coffee and lunch on Sunday).

Accommodation at the County Hotel is limited; applications for places must reach the International Secretariat by August 1st.

SOUTH AFRICA

We publish here some extracts from a large number of affidavits which have been submitted to us by released prisoners complaining of brutality and ill-treatment. The purpose of this selection is not to excite hatred, but to remind our supporters that the most effective way of preventing this type of treatment is inspection. All Groups with an adopted South African prisoner are asked to invite the International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, Switzerland, to arrange for a delegate to visit him in jail.

Groups are reminded that letters written to South African organisations concerned with care of prisoners and their families should not give vent to the expression of political opinions. The organisations are only permitted to function so long as they confine themselves strictly to their humanitarian objectives.

Because of the acute shortage of the central funds for the support of prisoners' families, each Group is asked to make it a point of honour to raise the money necessary for the support of its adopted family. A payment of £5 per month is sufficient to feed an average-sized African family. Remittances should be sent direct to the family either by British Postal Order or, from other countries, by International Money Order. Upon the release of a prisoner it is recommended that a resettlement grant of £15 should be sent as soon as practicable.

"One of the first things I noticed on arrival at Robben Island was that the warders carried batons and pick-handles. One of my companions, Maytham Mvukuzo, was assaulted by the Chief Warder (I don't know his name, he has since left) on our second day. This happened before my eyes. He was assaulted on the head with a pick-handle and was told to explain the injury as a razor cut acquired when his head was shaved. I heard the Chief Warder say that as this was Robben Island and all complaints came straight to him, it was no use to complain.

"That I was arrested on the 26th of April, 1962. That the treatment of myself at Robben Island and those prisoners who were sentenced at the same time as myself was not too bad, but the treatment of the political prisoners who arrived in March 1963 was very bad . . . That the criminal prisoners were then called and asked to dig a hole

in which the man who had refused to give information was placed in; he was then buried up to his neck in the sand. That the warder then urinated into his mouth . . . That the same afternoon I heard the Captain tell the criminal prisoners to force the political prisoners to have sexual relations with them. That immediately after the political prisoners had been forced to have sexual intercourse with the criminal prisoners, fighting broke out; the political prisoners were stronger than the other prisoners so the warders helped the criminal prisoners by hitting the political prisoners with sticks . . . That the political prisoner was then taken to the warder's office and beaten up by the warders; we saw him go there and then heard his screams. That when they had finished beating him, they threw excrement over his head."

"That I would be lifted with the stick and while applying electric shocks I would be left to drop down on my back. The pressure was so high that I messed myself up . . . The electric pains still remain in my body. All prisoners complain these shocks which they still feel in their bodies."

"Ferrara saw a big operation on my stomach and said to the other police, 'be careful he can die any time' . . . On the 10th July, 1963, I saw the visiting magistrate and reported to him that I was assaulted by the police. In reply, the magistrate said, 'You also wanted to go to Tanganyika to learn to come back and kill the whites, so they are also doing what they like on you'."

"On the 10th of September I appeared at Bellville court before a magistrate who said that no charge would be brought against us and ordered our release. I was told after my release that I had lost my job and was given twenty days in which to leave the city of Cape Town and told to go back to the Transkei. Prior to my arrest I had lived in Cape Town for ten years."

"On June 24th, 1963, I was taken to Paarl and the case against me was withdrawn in the magistrate's court. On my release I was informed by my employer that my job had been taken and I was subsequently endorsed out of the Paarl municipal area by the Paarl Registration Officer who would not grant me a work-seeking permit. I do not have the fare to go to Willowvale with and that I have no prospects of being employed there. That I am not a member of the P.A.C. and or Poqo and that I did not participate in disturbances at Paarl on the 21st November, 1963."

TURKEY

Groups sometimes—and outsiders, often—doubt whether AMNESTY letters are received by adopted prisoners. Although the number of replies received by Groups from serving prisoners is small, there is evidence that many letters are received. We print below extracts from a letter written to the Mansfield Group in Nottinghamshire, Great Britain, by a prisoner in Turkey. This is one of several prisoners' letters from different countries sent to the International Secretariat. Groups receiving replies from prisoners are asked to send copies of any material suitable for future publication in the quarterly.

"I am fifty-four years old and a lady. I have spent two years in the U.S.A. as special Research Fellow of the American Cancer Society at Barnard Free Cancer Hospital and Washington University Cancer Research Laboratories, St. Louis, Mo., and three years as Associated Professor of Cancer Research at the University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla. I have been instrumental in the founding of two cancer societies, the cancer hospital in Ankara, and the Atomic Energy Committee under the Democrats, and of the preparation of the plans for the Cekmece Centre for Nuclear Research and Training.

"I was arrested on August 18th, 1963, without an order of arrest after my house had been searched by five civilian policemen and I had been examined naked by a female policewoman. I was taken to the Police Department where I was interrogated standing for hours, until I nearly collapsed because I was sick with fever and jaundice. I was threatened in a number of ways in order to commit myself to confess that I was a communist and that certain well-known women and men were communists. The civilians had come to my flat at 4.30 a.m. At 7.30 p.m. I was taken to the Military Cadet School by two policemen without any explanation, and put into a room with obliterated windows under lock at the Tank School Building, with three other intellectual women. We were 400 civilians arrested in Ankara. Hundreds were arrested and tortured in Istanbul. After a few days of a not humane treatment, I was given to the No. 3 Military Court Martial, which had been put up for the civilians after the vainly attempted revolution of May 21st.

"Previously, I had been threatened by politicians because I continued my duty as family doctor of Mrs. Aydemir and her two young children. She is the wife of Colonel Aydemir who attempted the revolution. I have been their family doctor since 1959 and refused to abandon the wife and children, more so as the boy had been forced to leave the Military Air School on May 22nd. I had been outspoken as abolitionist after the condemnation

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of death of the colonel and his friends after the trial at the Court Martial No. 1.

"I was condemned for an alleged military-political crime to three years of heavy prison with the following circumstances: 1. The fact that I had a professor's title. 2. The fact stated by the court based on its observation that I was a person interested in personal benefits! The officers present stood waiting when they let me leave the courtroom before anybody else. The judgement passed on me was accepted by the Supreme Military Court of Justice in my absence. My lawyer had not presented my second defence and documents to this court. The Supreme Court's judgement was that my action was 'an attempt to save the life of Col. Talet Aydemir'. The two condemnations appeared in all the Turkish papers. After the second had been passed, I was immediately transferred without delay to the civilian Central Prison, Women's Section, Anakara-Cebici.

"In the Women's Section, I was not able to read even an ordinary newspaper article. I became very sick. The doctor of the prison tried to send me to the insane asylum, but thanks to the statement of the Mil. Med. Acad. this attempt was not successful. Finally, thanks to an attack of hypertension and asthma, I was transferred to the section of political prisoners in this hospital where I was the head of the pathology department for the past twelve years. My health is improving since these last twelve months, and some colleagues are trying to keep me here."

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Group members are increasingly making journeys to the countries where their adopted prisoner is held captive. The following extracts from the report of a Danish lawyer show that he paid a visit to Mons. Beran, Archbishop of Prague, and set about making enquiries on behalf of an imprisoned diplomat.

"I went to the Archbishop's palace. In the meantime I had learned that here is the central office of the Catholic Church. I told him about my connection with AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL and showed him the letter from London. Two of the officials seemed to be aware of the Organisation. I was treated kindly, but I could not get any information, neither on the participants in the amnesty of October 1963 nor about the fate of Bishop Hopko.

"So I made up my mind to seek out Archbishop Beran. A lady born in Germany gave me the address of a sympathetic priest, who told me that the Archbishop was living in Villa Charita, together with a number of nuns and some other priests, in the village of Mukarov, 30 km east of Prague. I

was able to go there without causing the Archbishop or myself any trouble with the authorities.

"I went there on Sunday 29th, and was received kindly by Mons. Beran in his modest living-room. He expressed his great gratitude to the Organisation and said it was very important in the struggle for liberation of others as well as in his own case. While in prison his conditions were poor and restricted; however they were far better than the conditions in Dachau, where the nazis kept him during the war. As far as he knew, none of the priests suffered physical injuries as prisoners of the present regime.

"For the time being the Archbishop is not allowed to perform any clerical function publicly. He is deprived of contact with the Catholic Church, as such. He is allowed to move freely outside Prague but the government does not want him in the capital.

"Archbishop Beran asked me to forward his blessing to the Organisation. He appeared to esteem it highly.

"Hoping to get assistance from the Czech Lawyers Association I went to see them on Friday, but the Association were unable to help to get into contact with penal institutions, as the Ministry had refused. I asked whether the association could procure a discussion for me; with a teacher of criminal law or the like; I must mention, that the Association has its domicile in a building of the law-faculty. An attempt was made, but in vain, due to the coming Easter, and the Congress of Democratic Lawyers which was to be held in Budapest the following week. Therefore, no one was available.

"Then I made by enquiries in the AMNESTY cases, especially about the diplomat Palivec, supposing that he is a lawyer. The Association denied any knowledge of Mr. Palivec and I was again referred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"At the messengers' room of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs I asked to see the diplomat, Mr. Palivec. The messenger obligingly looked up Mr. Palivec in his register, but was unable to find him. He made a telephone call asking about Palivec. Then his kindness disappeared. He could not tell anything at all about this man.

"Concerning the conditions for prisoners of conscience, I did not have the chance or the time to meet a former prisoner. According to several sources the prisoners of the nineteen-fifties had had quite a rough time, whereas conditions in prisons during the last few years had improved a good deal. Now it was compared to a military camp, with strict working discipline, but also with passable living conditions.

"Furthermore I was told that nowadays many fewer prisoners of conscience were taken in Czechoslovakia."