

# AIR

amnesty international review



**A Quarterly Review  
of news and comment  
on international  
human rights**

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## **New Look for the "Bulletin"**

This issue of AMNESTY's quarterly news review marks a change of title and design. Subsequent issues will see further changes to improve the content: for example, by inviting National Sections and Groups to submit articles and letters for publication.

No change will be made for its own sake. The purpose is to make AIR an authoritative journal reporting on political and religious persecution throughout the world and on AMNESTY's work in the field of international human rights.

## **Elsinore: Mandate for Change**

When a journalist hears the word "crisis" he reaches for his clichés. Undeniably AMNESTY went through something of a crisis during February and March; and predictably the press reacted to it with reports of "skeletons in the cupboard", "impending disintegration", "breakaway movements", "biting attacks", "sensational allegations". . . The average newspaper reader can be forgiven for concluding that AMNESTY was on the point of death and that the argument turned only on the form of burial.

To understand the real nature of the crisis, it is necessary first to understand the nature of AMNESTY itself. Like many voluntary movements, AMNESTY was the inspiration of one man who saw a need and was compelled to meet it, and whose faith and tenacity were sufficient to overcome all difficulties. Peter Benenson is such a man. He created AMNESTY and led it with genius. AMNESTY has grown faster in six years than even he might at first have thought possible. National Sections have been formed in 20 countries, and 550 Groups. Qualified staff have been appointed. The list of adopted prisoners grows longer. AMNESTY is a unique authority and has an impressive influence on governments.

Yet the organisation pivoted on one man, looked to him, depended on him. Such a situation, as so many movements have discovered, cannot be sustained indefinitely. The need for a system of management becomes overwhelming. The democratic process must begin.

Seen in the context of its organic growth, AMNESTY's recent difficulties are not so surprising. Nor is it odd that they should have been surmounted as smoothly as they have. It is more a tribute to Peter Benenson that he created a movement strong enough to move from adolescence to adulthood with so mild a trauma.

The change itself was triggered by a series of allegations made known through the press. There were three: that the loyalty of some members of AMNESTY was in question; that government intelligence services were at work within the organisation; and that relief operations in Rhodesia following U.D.I. had used covert funds from Governmental sources.

The first two allegations were made by Peter Benenson and, on their publication, Mr. Peter Calvocoressi was asked, with the express approval of Peter Benenson, to make an impartial investigation. Mr. Calvocoressi is Reader in International Relations at Sussex University, and a former Chairman of the Africa Bureau. His findings, submitted to the International Executive at its meeting in Elsinore on March 11th and 12th, and unanimously accepted, were that there was no substance to the allegations. This being the case, it would be unfair for AMNESTY to disclose the exact charges or the individuals named in them. However, the enquiry's findings led the Executive to the regrettable conclusion that it could no longer place the same implicit reliance on Peter Benenson's judgement as it had in the past. With this very much in mind, his offer of resignation was accepted.

The allegations about AMNESTY's role in Rhodesia were fully investigated by the Executive Committee. It was made clear that neither the International nor British Executive had been told that money had been received from donors suggested by the British Government. Whatever the origin of the funds, it is certain that there were no strings attached to their use and that the money has been used exclusively for humanitarian relief purposes. None the less it was agreed that, for the future, AMNESTY must not only be independent and impartial but must not be put into a position where anything else could even be alleged. Rhodesian relief money is scrupulously administered through the Christian Council of Rhodesia—a fact that will be well known to AMNESTY Groups with Rhodesian prisoners. The funds were never squandered: for example, Miss Toynbee's "chauffeur-driven car" was a second-hand vehicle driven by an elderly man, and was needed to contact clergy in the African townships. For a factual account of relief work in Rhodesia, readers are advised to read the article in this issue based on a recent report of the Christian Council.

Some of the more fanciful press reports of the events at the Elsinore meeting presented a scene of confusion bordering on civil war. Perhaps it was the proximity of Hamlet's castle that prompted some of the more vivid passages; the facts tell a more constructive if less dramatic story. Given the reasonable differences of opinion that occur when any 25 people gather together in one place, there was remarkable concord and cohesion. Once the Calvocoressi Report had been read, discussed and approved, all the recommendations put to the Executive were accepted unanimously.

The Executive made two significant decisions designed to meet the new demands of AMNESTY's growth. First, recognising its increasingly international character, it decided to appoint a full-time Director-General initially from one of the Scandinavian countries. Second, it was agreed that three working parties should be established to investigate and propose immediate improvements to the financial, administrative and overseas operations. These are already getting down to work and their recommendations will be implemented as a matter of urgency.

AMNESTY will not be quite the same again but there is no need to regret it. Change was inevitable and though nobody could foresee the exact circumstances that would lead to it, everyone can know with certainty that it will ultimately benefit the whole movement.

PETER BURNS

## Efficiency of Relief Work in Rhodesia

We have received a report on the work of the Christian Council Relief Office in Bulawayo, Rhodesia, and copies are now available on request from Head Office. It is an extremely valuable report which not only explains the wide range of welfare activities engaged in by a primarily religious body but also makes clear to whom and on what basis aid is distributed.

At the beginning of 1966 there were various organisations and groups operating for the relief of political prisoners, detainees and restrictees, and for the relief of their families and dependants. These included Church groups, legal aid and welfare societies and educational committees. It was then decided that there should be a more concentrated and centralised effort to help those who were not already receiving it. In order to create a system which avoided the possibility of duplication and waste, the Christian Council undertook to act as the central agency for the major distribution of aid contributed from inside and outside the country.

### Aid Criteria

During 1966 funds for the Christian Council came mostly from outside Rhodesia, the principal contributor being the World Council of Churches. Two relief offices were established, one in Bulawayo and one in Salisbury, and these were to handle matters of family welfare. In February and March 1966 an effort was made to locate all cases that might be eligible for aid. The formulation of satisfactory criteria for the distribution of funds has evolved gradually: in the months immediately after U.D.I. the prevailing uncertainty and instability made a critical assessment of grants extremely difficult. Eventually a firm allocation of areas was made by which the Salisbury office became responsible for Salisbury, Mashonaland and Eastern districts and the Bulawayo office for Bulawayo, Matabeleland and the Western districts.

### Aid Distribution

The report indicates the categories of persons eligible for aid from the general funds of the Christian Council. They are families and dependants of:

- (1) Detainees held under Emergency regulations.
- (2) Restrictees held in detention under Emergency regulations but restricted to specific areas under the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act.
- (3) Prisoners convicted under the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act for non-violent offences.
- (4) Prisoners convicted under Mandatory Sentence of Death (School fees only).

The conditions for qualification take into account the earnings of the wife, the amount of Government or other forms of assistance, and the particular needs of the family, i.e. school fees, rent, expenses, etc.

The report makes a distinction between those helped from general funds on a regular or semi-regular basis and those whom the relief offices recommend for "adoption" by overseas groups. The conditions for adoption are as follows:

- (1) Priority is given to five-year restrictions and to families in special hardship. One or two single men are adopted mainly for help with their education.
- (2) The restrictee should be non-violent in politics.
- (3) He should be restricted for his beliefs rather than for his activities.

### Thorough Checks

The Christian Council Relief Offices have established strict routine methods for investigation and assessment of cases in order to make thorough checks on the identity of the husband or wife and their stated needs. This involves references from any of the following: (1) the municipal social welfare department; (2) a church, priest or minister; (3) previous employers of the husband; (4) a trade union or other association.

This report establishes beyond doubt the professional standards and valuable nature of the work now being done by the Christian Council in Rhodesia.

SARAH RICHARDSON



## Aspida Case Disturbs Greek Political Scene

It must be unusual in the history of any country for a single court case to cause the downfall of two different governments; yet this is just what the ASPIDA case in Greece appears to have done. ASPIDA is the name of an alleged secret organisation within the army which has been associated with the name of the civilian politician Andreas Papandreou. Its members are accused of plotting to overthrow the monarchy and establish a "Nasser-type" government in Greece. It was first publicly mentioned in May 1965. Then in July 1965 the King dismissed the Prime Minister, George Papandreou (father of Andreas) after he had tried unsuccessfully to take over the Ministry of Defence which was responsible for investigating the ASPIDA allegations. Now, almost two years later, another Greek government has collapsed—this time over a dispute about the parliamentary immunity of deputies (M.P.s) and, more particularly, about the immunity of Andreas Papandreou whom the prosecution want to arrest on a treason charge for his alleged role in ASPIDA.

## Fifteen Officers Sentenced

Meanwhile at a court martial which lasted through four months and the evidence of 237 witnesses, twenty-eight army officers accused of complicity in the ASPIDA "plot" were on trial in Athens. According to observers (including Keith Kyle who observed part of the court martial on behalf of AMNESTY) the trial was dominated by politics. At one stage, the forty defence lawyers, most of whom were members of Papandreou's Centre Union Party, walked out in protest against the conduct of the trial. George Papandreou denounced the whole affair as a frame-up by the Right. Many of the defendants refused even to speak in their own defence. Finally in March this year, fifteen of the officers were given prison sentences from between two and eighteen years, while the remaining thirteen were acquitted.

The sentenced officers have appealed and already politicians have been talking of an amnesty. Both the Centre Union and the Left-wing E.D.A. parties have demanded this, while the leader of the Right-wing E.R.E. party, Mr. Canellopoulos, also promised, before he was made Prime Minister, to amnesty the officers if he achieved power.

AMNESTY has been following the ASPIDA affair with concern. It seems clear, however, from the political complexity of the whole story and the nature of the charges that we cannot, at this stage, take up the cases of any of the individuals involved.

## The Case of Eleni Voulgari

AMNESTY has recently been actively involved in a very different case—that of Eleni Voulgari, a young mother who was sentenced last year under Law 375 to a ten-year sentence for an alleged offence committed in 1954. It is over a year now since the Greek Government passed a law amnestying those imprisoned under the Emergency Laws 375 and 509 and appeared seriously to consider repealing these laws altogether. As a result, some seventy long-term political prisoners have been released—most of whom had been detained for over ten years for their political activities or affiliations following the Civil War. A welcome event has been the release of Helene Massousis. She was a political exile who returned this year from Bulgaria to bury her husband in Greek soil. She was arrested, tried on a 20-year-old charge, but acquitted—apparently on the grounds that she could not now be tried for an offence that took place so long ago. Such a decision may well create an important precedent in the Greek courts.

These more encouraging developments tend, paradoxically, to make the continued detention of Eleni Voulgari and of six other "375 Law" prisoners (who have so far been excluded from the 1966 amnesty) seem particularly unnecessary and inappropriate. It is to be hoped that any future Greek government will consider with compassion Eleni Voulgari's appeal for grace and review once more the cases of the remaining six "375 Law" prisoners.

STELLA JOYCE

[Editor: As we go to press, news has come of the military coup in Greece. This article remains relevant, though the flood of arrests removes all hope of more liberal developments.]

## An Appeal

## to Every

## Reader

## who wants

## to Help Amnesty

In recent weeks we have all been concerned with AMNESTY's past. Now we must think about the future: in particular, how you can help us to meet our increasing financial commitments.

Few movements have grown as fast as ours. Six years ago AMNESTY was merely an idea. Today it is an international movement. In the past we managed to meet most of our costs from membership and Group affiliation fees. Today we are increasingly dependent on donations and covenants to help us meet the really heavy demands being made on our limited resources. Up till now we have rarely asked our supporters and sympathisers for this kind of financial contribution. Today we must ask all those who believe in our work to demonstrate their commitment, not with sympathy alone but with practical help to ensure our effective growth.

Funds are needed to maintain a fast-expanding investigation bureau; to increase the number of on-the-spot investigations of cases and prison conditions; to send legal observers to crucial trials; to care for destitute families of prisoners.

At a time when more and more governments are threatening personal liberties and when more and more people are being persecuted for their beliefs, the world's need for AMNESTY is greater than ever before. It remains unique: for all too many prisoners of conscience, AMNESTY is their only hope of freedom, their only safeguard against ill-treatment or torture, the only support for their families.

If AMNESTY is to deal adequately with its lengthening list of adopted prisoners, it must be financially strong. That is why your practical support now is so necessary. If you can help, please send as generous a donation as you are able to make, to:

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, AIR, Turnagain Lane, Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

## Book Focuses Attention on Soviet Jewry

"The Jews of Silence", a personal report on Soviet Jewry, by Elie Wiesel. Translated from the Hebrew by Neal Kozody, 143 pp., Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1966.

Elie Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz, went to the U.S.S.R. in 1965 to form his own impressions of the Soviet Jews and their daily life. He calls this book a testimony of what he saw and heard. He did not approach leaders of the Jewish community but concentrated on members of the congregation, anxious to find out what they thought about the situation of the Jews rather than listen to official statements. He found that they were much more forthcoming with questions about Jews abroad and in Israel than with information about their own position. His repeated questions about themselves were answered with, "Better not ask". "We can't say, we can't talk. It's dangerous". "Don't talk, just pray". What is it they are afraid of?

## National Identity

Under Soviet law, the Jews are recognised as members of a distinct nationality, as are the Uzbeks, the Ukrainians and so on. Unlike the other racial groups however, they are not concentrated in one special area but are scattered over the whole country, the majority living in the western areas; quite a large proportion of the population of Moscow, for example, is Jewish, one-sixth being a conservative estimate. While other racial minorities are entitled to education and literature in their own languages and are granted this right with varying degrees of generosity, the Jews are seriously deprived of both these and other rights. Until 1948 they enjoyed a vigorous cultural life in their own language, Yiddish, consisting of numerous Yiddish newspapers, publishing houses, schools and theatres; after that date these institutions were closed down and many of the people involved were simply murdered by the secret police.



For eleven years no books or magazines were published in Yiddish at all. After protests from abroad the Yiddish journal *Sovietish Heimland* was instituted in 1961 and appears once a month with contributions from Jewish writers; the editor consistently denies that there is anything wrong with the situation of Soviet Jews. In 1964, two Yiddish books were published in editions of 18,000 copies each. Of course not all Jews speak Yiddish but in a recent census 400,000 gave it as their mother tongue. Considerably more than that speak and understand it. In 1961, on the other hand, the Yakuts, living in Eastern Siberia and numbering 236,000, had the benefit of 144 books published in their own language.

### Religious Identity

The link between Jews is of course a religious one and freedom of religion is theoretically guaranteed in the U.S.S.R. The Orthodox and Baptist churches are both recognised by the state and are permitted to maintain their own associations and to produce a very limited amount of Bibles, prayer books and so on. The Jews are permitted synagogues but apart from 3000 copies of a "Peace Prayer Book" in 1956 and 3000 religious calendars last year, no religious literature has been published since the 1920s; nor has there been any central co-ordinating body since that time. Thus six members of the Moscow synagogue were attacked by the newspaper *Trud* in March and August 1964 for allegedly giving Israeli diplomats slanderous information on the situation of Soviet Jews in exchange for Zionist literature, religious articles and souvenirs from Israel. We have details of many such newspaper attacks on Jews who are accused, notably, of soliciting from Israeli tourists or diplomats such articles as talliths (prayer shawls), skull-caps and religious calendars. In 1961 a leading member of the Leningrad Jewish community, Gepalia Pechersky, was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment for "con-sorting with foreign agents" and appeals on his behalf have been answered with the statement that there is no prospect of release before 1969. It is believed that many other Jews are also in prison for alleged "economic offences", but many of these may have their origin in the celebration of Jewish customs such as the baking of unleavened bread for the Passover and the buying and selling of religious articles in the synagogue.

### No Let-Up to Assimilation?

There is no doubt that it is, above all, the Jews' religious identity and their strong emotional link to Israel which makes them suspect by the authorities. Religion in all forms is constantly ridiculed, often in primitive terms, by all mass media and Israel is attacked as being a capitalist state "in league with the Bonn government". In spite of this Elie Wiesel found even Jewish Communists turning out to dance and sing at Jewish religious festivals and to ask anxiously about Israel, clearly still the promised land of their imagination—even though they were unsure whether they would emigrate there, should they be allowed to. Recently the authorities have granted better facilities for baking unleavened bread; there is even talk of a Jewish school in Moscow. It remains to be seen whether the Soviet state will really relent in its fight to assimilate this obstinate minority which is such a thorn in its flesh.

BRUCE LAIRD

### Brazil: New Government, Old Ways

The succession of Marshal Castelo Branco by President Costa e Silva on March 15th was stage-managed to enable the new President to take office with the appearance of being the benevolent successor to an austere military dictator. President Castelo Branco had the reputation of being cold and aloof; Costa e Silva is genial, expansive, and fond of racing. In the last three months of his Presidency, Castelo Branco took upon himself the unpopularity occasioned by the new Constitution (which increases the powers of the Executive against Congress and the regional Governments), the new Press Law (which could be used to muzzle the Press) and the National Security Law (which confirms the jurisdiction of the military courts over civilians). Immediately before relinquishing office, Castelo

Branco deprived 45 people of their political rights for ten years by Presidential decree. Those affected cannot hold office or take part in any political activity and there is no appeal. Over 450 persons have been deprived of their political rights in the three years since the coup d'état.

Although the stage was set to enable the new President to inaugurate a new era of confidence and optimism, and to launch a fresh attack on the grave problem of inflation (still 40 per cent in 1966) it is unlikely that he will liberalise the regime. Like his predecessor, President Costa e Silva is a military man, and the Ministries of Defence and Regional Planning have been entrusted to soldiers. Although Brazil has technically returned to democratic government, Costa e Silva is equipped with the weapons of a dictator. The President is now elected by indirect vote, and the powers of Congress have been reduced.

## The Press Law

Under the new Press Law penalties of up to four years may be imposed by the courts on journalists guilty of "abusing the freedom of the press". It is now an offence to publish any article "injurious to the honour or reputation" of the President, members of Congress or members of the Supreme Court, irrespective of whether the allegations are true or not; or to publish any article tending to disturb public order or denigrate the financial system. It is an offence to publish any article written by a foreigner on Brazilian affairs, and it is illegal to publish any anonymous article. The provisions of the Act apply to all mass media.

The Brazilian press in the past has publicised the treatment of political prisoners, including the practice of torture by the DOPS (Secret Police). Last autumn, for example, *Ultima Hora* gave wide publicity to the murder under torture of Sergeant Manoel Soares, who was under interrogation for distributing "subversive" pamphlets, and the newspaper published statements from fellow-prisoners who had witnessed his torture. In future, newspapers may hesitate before publishing articles of this kind. However, it is impossible to know how rigorously the restrictions will be applied by the new Government, or whether imprisoned journalists will be granted the favourable conditions of imprisonment promised in the Act. Proceedings are now being brought against Helio Fernandes, the Editor of the evening paper, *Tribuna da Imprensa*, for writing an article criticising Castelo Branco while under a ban depriving him of his political rights; his case may indicate the line which the government intends to pursue in prosecutions involving journalists.

## Justice

The new Minister of Justice, Dr. Gama e Silva, former Rector of the University of Sao Paulo, who also presides over Internal Security, is a cousin of the President. The new Minister of the Supreme Federal Tribunal is Senhor Aduino Lucio Cardoso. (AMNESTY members should note these appointments for sending letters of protest to the Ministry of Justice, Brasilia.)

One view of the prevailing mood in Brazil is seen in the poems of Father Odilon Tupinamba, a Capuchin monk whose book of poetry has been banned, and who faces prosecution by a military court. He has sent us some poems he wrote during his detention on an island fortress and writes:

"The imposed regime is so  
democratic, but so  
democratic, that the authorities  
find themselves forced to teach all the time  
just how democratic it is.

... Frankly our people  
are very obstinate,  
because they just don't want to be convinced  
that there is no dictatorship!"

MARGOT LEVY

## **U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights**

One of the reasons why AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL exists is that there is so far no international machinery to ensure that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—Articles 18 and 19 of which are AMNESTY's "Charter"—is respected.

A modest step in the right direction was taken at the recent session of the United Nations Commission of Human Rights when it approved the proposal for the appointment of a High Commissioner for Human Rights. If this proposal is implemented—and it has yet to be approved by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly—the High Commissioner will be an independent person, acting within the framework of the U.N., who will have certain limited but potentially important functions in the human rights field. He will not, unfortunately, be able to intervene in individual cases or at the request of individuals, as AMNESTY so often does, but he will be the first independent authority in the human rights field at the world level.

The High Commissioner will have powers in two main fields. The first is the U.N. where he will be able to advise and assist the various U.N. bodies on human rights problems, and to report to the General Assembly on developments in the human rights field. This latter power will enable him to point out problems and difficulties and thus to focus world attention on them—an important step towards their solution.

He will also have power to assist member states with any problems they may bring to him, and so may have opportunities to influence the development of human rights in countries which turn to him for assistance.

In the debate at the Human Rights Commission, mention was made of one field of particular interest to AMNESTY in which the High Commissioner may be able to assist—the violation of the rights of religious minorities. But only practice will tell how far he may be able to help the persecuted.

The proposal will be discussed at the next meeting of the Economic and Social Council in May, and if they approve it it will go to the General Assembly in the autumn. Approval by the General Assembly would mean that the High Commissioner would start work early in 1968, an appropriate time since it is International Year for Human Rights.

HILARY CARTWRIGHT

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### **Karin O'Donovan**

Karin O'Donovan, Honorary Secretary of the Irish Section, died on April 8th after an short illness. To an extraordinary degree she combined high ideals, great capacity for hard work and a gaiety of spirit that made all who knew her feel enlivened and inspired. She was one of those who feel for prisoners and the unfortunate because they themselves make so much of their own freedom. AMNESTY will not forget her.

R.S.

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