

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
12 Crane Court, Fleet Street, E.C.4.

NEWSLETTER for GROUPS

INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY 1966

Enclosed with this News Sheet are details of the Assembly together with application forms. We hope that as many members as possible will attend. Will leaders of groups please make sure that the papers on the Assembly are seen by all members of the group. Further copies can be obtained from Head Office on application. Can we emphasise once again that it would be a great help to the organisers of the Assembly, if we could know, in plenty of time, the names of those people who will be coming to Copenhagen.

Sections are reminded that the International Secretariat must be notified by July 1st, of those countries that will be represented by their full complement of two voting delegates. The names of the delegates must reach the Secretariat by August 1st at the latest.

As stated in the May Bulletin, ALL resolutions must reach the International Secretariat by July 15th.

NEWS FROM BRITISH SECTION

A.G.M. The speaker, Mrs. Adelaide Hain, wife of the former Chairman of the Liberal Party in Pretoria, gave a vivid description of what it means to be a "banned" person in South Africa today, and must have sent many people away with a new determination to work for a more tolerant world.

It was reported that Cardinal Heenan had intimated his decision in future only to respond to appeals which reach him via Headquarters. There was considerable discussion and it was agreed that though requests for information could be channelled to him in this way, Groups must retain their freedom to send appeals to anybody they wish.

The following resolutions were passed :-

From Putney Group asking that groups in schools should be suitably supervised and new groups should receive a personal visit wherever possible.

From the Steering Committee agreeing to donate £1500 to the International Secretariat and a further donation later.

From the Executive asking the International Secretariat to press for the creation of a United Nations passport for people "deprived of their nationality by states pursuing a policy in contempt of U.N. resolutions".

From the Shrewsbury Group asking for the engagement of a full-time, fully-qualified staff, and the inauguration of a long-term fund-raising programme, Groups being urged to contribute to a special drive to finance this.

An emergency resolution deploring the evasive action of H.M.G. to our request that a representative of the Swedish Section of Amnesty should be allowed to visit detainees in Aden, and approving the decision of the Swedish Section to send a representative without further delay.

EXECUTIVE. At the meeting two new members were elected, Mr. Tony Barton of Bristol and Mr. O.O'Brien, National Assistant Secretary of S.O.G.A.S. Henry Warner was re-elected as Vice-Chairman and Duncan Guthrie as Treasurer. Gwen Lawrence and Alan Cooper were re-elected as Threes Representatives and Lionel Elvin who was a co-opted member last year was elected to fill a vacancy. Leonard Schapiro and Leonard Deeds retired after completing their terms of office and Ken Cottman resigned owing to domestic circumstances. Our thanks to all these for past services.

FOR SALE! The "Litany for the Day of Human Rights" by Salvador de Madratiaga has been written and decorated by a calligrapher and is being printed in a form suitable for framing. Copies will shortly be on sale for Amnesty funds at 10/6 each. This could well be purchased to hang in schools etc., as well as for private use and we hope Groups will do all they can to boost the sales.

A. Brief notes from some countries where there are Prisoners of Conscience :-

1. South Africa

Banishment and Banned Persons.

Mrs. Adelaide Hain spoke at the Annual General Meeting of the British Section (11th June, 1966) on the situation of the Banned persons in South Africa. She herself was banned with her husband in 1963 for a period of 5 years, but now both have left South Africa as prohibited persons and live in Britain.

She described in detail the situation of the Banned white South Africans. None of them (with the notable exception of Mrs. Helen JOSEEF) need financial assistance, these prisoners are nevertheless in great need of support and encouragement. (African and coloured Banned persons are, of course, more urgent candidates for adoption.)

There are some 500 banned persons at present in South Africa; we have the records of some 80 cases. It is felt that the white cases are suitable for "extra adoption" by Amnesty Groups; perhaps correspondence with them can be carried out by younger members of your Groups. Please inform the Head Office if you are interested in adopting one of these cases.

(Bengt Albons)

2. Iraq

The conference on Human Rights in Iraq (held in Paris in February of this year,) where Amnesty was represented by Dr. Hajo Wandschneider of the German Section and Maitre Nicholas Jacob, President of the French Section, marks the beginning of a new phase in Amnesty's work for political prisoners in Iraq.

120 suitable cases for adoption were prepared from the lists of prisoners issued at this conference; but as many as 500 may eventually be adopted as soon as the nature of the charges against them has been verified.

Excellent work by Bristol University Groups (British Section) recently established a precedent for direct contact with prisoners in Iraq. Since this breakthrough, several encouraging and informative letters have been received by Amnesty Groups.

There are 50 cases currently under adoption by Amnesty Groups; this, however, represents a small proportion of the estimated 5,500 Prisoners of Conscience in jail in Iraq.

(Charles Medawar)

3. Eastern Europe

Due to work for the Report on Prison Conditions in East Germany, work on other countries in Eastern Europe has been somewhat held up. We have, however, recently received some news about Czech priests in prison - some new names and some released - and there has been support from left wing people in the U.K. and the U.S.A. for certain intellectuals imprisoned in Poland, who are already adopted by Groups.

Through the work on the East German Prison Report, increased attention has been paid to individual cases. I met many ex-prisoners during my visit to Germany who had previously been only names to me, and I attended a congress where Amnesty's name received great applause. Karin O'Donovan (Irish Section) did very much during her visit to West Germany to make Amnesty more widely known, and at least one result of this was that the refugee section of the German Social-Democratic Party (W.Germany) sent us a list of all prisoners known to them. We are now much better informed as to the number of Prisoners of Conscience in East Germany than ever before.

In connection with this Prison Report Amnesty was attacked in an East Berlin newspaper "Berliner Zeitung" and accused of fanning the cold war and ignoring the plight of Prisoners of Conscience in West Germany. It was not difficult to find a reply to this and we sent a comprehensive answer to the relevant quarters.

(Bruce Laird)

West Germany

On June 16th we received a letter from WILLI PAASCH, the West German Communist imprisoned in Hamburg for communist activities, who was on the Kit Scheme in March and adopted by a Group of the Australian Section. He was released on

May 26th, a third of his sentence having been remitted, and he now has a suspended sentence of two years.

He sends his thanks to Amnesty International and to all the people in the movement, who worked for his release; he hopes to write to them all individually. Cards reached him in prison from all parts of the world.

(Bruce Laird)

4. Brazil

After a long period of trying to establish some means of receiving up-to-date and relevant information on the position of Prisoners of Conscience in Brazil, we are now able to view the situation a little more clearly. There is no doubt that there are many, many political prisoners in Brazil in need of our help. It is still almost impossible to trace which prisons they are held in, or when they are likely to be brought to trial. Recently, the better known prisoners have been tried before Military Tribunals, and the resulting sentences are on the whole absolutely monstrous. Where sufficient information is available we are having such cases adopted.

In the meantime, those Groups who have adopted Brazilian prisoners should write to the following address for information:-

Mrs. Alzira Rudge,  
Rua Oton Bezerra de Melo 155,  
Gavea-ZC-20,  
Estado de Guanabara,  
Brazil.

(Mrs. Maureen Teitelbaum)

5. Aden

At their Annual General Meeting, on June 11th 1966, the British Section of Amnesty International passed the following Resolution:

"This meeting of the British Section of Amnesty International expresses its serious concern about the situation of detainees in Aden.

For nearly two months it has been requesting the British Government either to publish the report of the International Red Cross on prison conditions in Aden or to allow a representative from the Swedish Section of Amnesty to visit the detainees, as an impartial observer.

This meeting therefore:-

- (a) deplores the evasive attitude of the British Government on an important matter affecting Human Rights,
- (b) approves the decision of the Swedish Section of Amnesty International to send a representative to Aden without delay and agrees to cover half the cost,
- (c) presses the British Government to allow the publication of the relevant report of the International Red Cross, and
- (d) urges the immediate publication of the names of all those imprisoned without trial under the emergency regulations, with the reasons of their detention and the length of time they have been in custody."

Very briefly, the background is as follows. The British Government are anxious that Aden Colony and the mainland Protectorate States, should amalgamate in a Federation. This is opposed by certain pan-Arab political parties in Aden and by their allies in some of the Eastern Protectorate States. In the Colony itself Emergency Powers, augmented by the 1964 Special Powers Bill, are held by the Governor. Many of the up-country States are ruled autocratically. Since April 1965 at least 150 prisoners have been held without charge or trial on allegations of association with violence. There have also been complaints about conditions of detention, particularly during the period of interrogation. The Investigation Department has some detailed records on this point and furthermore wishes to investigate the allegations of complicity in violence made against the detainees; it seems that in some cases the opportunity has been taken to get rid of inconvenient political opponents.

For more than 10 weeks Amnesty's British Section attempted to get an answer from the Foreign Office on two factual points. First, had there been an International Red Cross Observer in Aden and had he been allowed to inspect the Detention Camps. Secondly, had the British Government any intention of allowing the publication of his report. Repeated letters and telephone calls followed a delegation to the Colonial Office - all to no result. The International Secretariat is, therefore, delighted that the British and Swedish Sections are to collaborate in sending an observer.

(Robert Swann, Gen. Secretary of the  
International Secretariat)

6. Portugal

I have been getting many letters from Groups who have adopted probable members of the Communist Party in Portugal asking whether they can really qualify as Prisoners of Conscience under Amnesty's definition. I therefore explain, briefly, the situation of the opposition in Portugal.

There exists a combination of democratic and liberal elements which is known as the Accao Democratico. They are mainly a verbal opposition. A new Catholic Opposition Party has been set up which is eager to see that the human values of the Catholic Church should be upheld in Portugal. The most difficult aspect of the Portuguese opposition for adopting groups is the position of the Communist Party. The traditional Communist Party of Portugal does not and has never advocated violence. They do advocate propaganda and strike action, and this would seem to be well within Amnesty's definition. In 1963, a break-away faction of the Communist Party, consisting of pro-China sympathisers, formed a movement called the Front for Popular Action (F.A.P.) This Front does advocate revolutionary action and violence. The traditional Communist Party has nothing to do with them and continues to call for peaceful co-existence.

Of course, as explained in the Background Paper, all political parties in Portugal are banned.

(Mrs. Maureen Teitelbaum)

7. Hungary

Readers of the May, 1966 Bulletin will remember the Stop Press report on Lord Gifford's visit to Hungary. Unfortunately, the Hungarians appear to be following a pattern all too familiar to Eastern European countries. They have not so far carried out their promise to reply in writing with a detailed report on the individual cases submitted to them by Lord Gifford. Lord Gifford has written to them again and is considering the possibility of making a further visit, at his own expense, later this Summer. Their failure to carry out their promises merely repeats what happened after a visit a few years ago by Peter Benenson and a similar situation appears to be developing after a visit to East Germany by Bent Knudsen, Danish Section.

It is clear that Eastern European authorities now have a less prejudiced view of Amnesty's activities but equally that they hope to keep Amnesty quiet without making any positive concessions. We shall watch the situation carefully and if we get no satisfaction will ask Groups and National Sections to resume their active campaign with increased vigour.

(Robert Swann)

8. Holidays

Again this year many Amnesty Group Members will be travelling abroad on holiday. Those members who wish to make enquiries either on behalf of their adopted prisoners or on behalf of other prisoners detained in the countries they are visiting are welcome, and in fact should if possible, to contact the Investigation Department at Amnesty Headquarters before they leave.

2. Since the beginning of this year, there have been some notable developments in the Library, and especially encouraging is the very large increase in the number of volunteers who work for the Investigation Department either in their homes or in the office on a part-time basis. At the time of writing, there are some 40 volunteers helping us in our work.

3. Increased specialisation by the full-time members of the Staff is now possible. In particular you can contact: Mrs. Maureen Teitelbaum re Portugal, Portuguese Colonies, Brazil; Mr. Bruce Laird re Eastern Europe and West Germany; Mrs. Marlys Deeds re English Speaking Africa; Mrs. Eva Blumenau re Spain; Mr. Bengt Albons (a most welcome volunteer sent by the Swedish Section) re South Africa. Concerning prisoners in other parts of the world, address your letters simply to the Secretary, Investigation Department.

4. Since January 1st 1966, 525 Case Sheets have been compiled by the Department and sent out to Amnesty Groups. 315 of these were sent out to 105 new Groups. The very heavy demand on the Department by new Groups regrettably created serious delays in some of our correspondence with Groups. This is now under control.

(Andrew Mann, Head of Investigation Department).

5. From the Librarian.

We are most grateful for the donation by the Oxted & Sevenoaks Groups (British Section) of the book "No Rusty Swords" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and particularly to Mrs. Irmgard Payne (Oxted) for the kind gift of "Letters & Papers from Prison" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

(Christel Marsh)