

air

amnesty international review



A Quarterly Review
of news and comment
on international
human rights

Number 27
May 1969
One Shilling

Amnesty Notebook

Iran: The Amnesty representative who visited Iran reported in detail to the International Executive Committee and recommendations have now been submitted to the Iranian Government.

Middle East: Amnesty representatives have visited Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel in 1969. Information has also been forwarded to the U.A.R. and we have been co-operating with other organisations particularly concerned with Jewish prisoners in Egypt. The public executions in Iraq aroused world opinion in an unprecedented fashion including the Middle Eastern countries themselves. Our representative who went to Iraq was not able to go into prisons but his report has provided useful working information and his presence there was reported in the local press. Information collected about certain allegations of ill treatment by Israeli authorities during interrogation have been sent to the Israeli Government with recommendations.

Singapore: Apart from the release of Low Tai Thong, detained for 12 years without trial, an Amnesty representative has visited Singapore and a report has been prepared on prison conditions for political detainees. This report has been sent to the Singapore Government.

Vietnam: A study is being prepared of conscientious objection to the Vietnam War and of prisoners held in the U.S.A., North and South Vietnam for reasons of conscience. If and when Peace talks are successful Amnesty International must be ready with its proposals for dealing with the living victims of the war on either side whose crime was one of conscience.

Register of Political Prisoners: A French publishing house is planning to publish an annual register of political prisoners throughout the world. It is an ambitious task and where Amnesty can provide information about Prisoners of Conscience it will. Information should be sent to or sought from Editions Halévy, 24 Place Dauphine, Paris, 1.

Sudan and Somali: In rapid visits in February by the Secretary General preliminary arrangements were made for the establishment of Amnesty International committees in these countries.

Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda: The Secretary General had talks with the respective governments regarding Somalis detained in Kenya since independence, Zanzibari ex-Ministers in prison since the Zanzibari revolution in 1953 and the Ugandans detained without trial under the emergency regulations, including those involved in the "Transition" cases.

Statuts d'Amnesty International en français: Les statuts adoptés par la Sixième Assemblée Internationale à Stockholm le 25 août 1968 ont été imprimés en version française. Des exemplaires peuvent être obtenus du Secrétariat International.

Daniel Madzimbamuto—Prisoner of the Year: The Danish national section of Amnesty printed postcards of Eleni Voulgari which were sent to Greece by almost all Amnesty members in Denmark and by many from other countries. The Danish section is now printing similar postcards for Daniel Madzimbamuto of Rhodesia and orders should be sent to Amnesty International, Gyldenlovesgade, 12 B, Copenhagen K, Denmark. Every effort has been made at the diplomatic level to secure the release of Mr. Madzimbamuto but the British authorities cannot help and so far the Rhodesians have not shown themselves willing to let him go and leave the country. His eyesight is failing and although a test-case in law, Madzimbamuto has never been associated with the resistance movement in Rhodesia. There is, therefore, no reason why the illegal Smith regime should not allow him to go to the United Kingdom for medical treatment.

Group reports are received regularly from some Groups, more rarely from others. They will be reflected in the Annual Report now under preparation. Groups and national sections are requested to send ideas, reports, proposals for Prisoners of Conscience week 1969 (November 15th to 22nd) quickly to the Editor of AIR.

Secretary

Greek Reforms

Early in April the Papadopoulos Government celebrated the Greek Easter and marked the end of their second year in power by announcing a number of apparently liberal reforms.

Three articles of the Constitution, suspended since April 1967, which give the basic rights of freedom of assembly, association and the sanctity of the home, were restored. It was announced that all but the most senior state employees who had lost their jobs under emergency decrees would be re-instated. All Greeks detained in exile—mostly the 1,954 on Leros and in Crete—will have their cases reviewed and, where possible, their terms cut. All prisoners convicted by courts martial since the 1967 *coup* can apply for review of their sentences. The provisions of the 1968 Constitution will be put into effect and no fewer than eighteen committees of jurists are to be set up to prepare the necessary draft legislation for this. A press code is promised for the near future.

In essentials, Greece remains under the martial law imposed on April 21st, 1967; political trials are by court martial, and there are still no curbs on arbitrary arrest and exile without trial. In such a situation all reforms should be welcomed and it seems churlish to criticise any improvements, however moderate. But a careful reading of the exact promises made by Mr. Papadopoulos suggests that Greeks may be little better off in the third year of the colonels than in either of the first two.

The promised review of court martial sentences specifically leaves out "offences in matters of national security and public order"—that is, almost all political cases. Dismissed state employees are to be re-instated, *except* "those for whom there is evidence of anti-national activities", and for them "the old law on councils of loyalty . . . will function"; this presumably means they will get their jobs back only if they sign a Declaration of Loyalty, and it was probably their refusal to do this which cost them their jobs in the first place. Articles 18 and 19 will come into effect only after two of the eighteen committees of jurists have drawn up appropriate legislation. Mr. Papadopoulos refused to say when this would be and when one has read the text of Article 19, it hardly seems to matter. The first paragraph states the right to form associations freely, but the second paragraph begins: "Every union of persons, the purpose or the activity of which are directed against . . . the principles of the regime or the social order of the security of the State or the political or civil liberties of the citizen, shall be prohibited".

Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe

In May each year since 1963, the South African Parliament has met to reconsider the special law under which Robert Sobukwe is detained. This year, just before the annual meeting was due, the South African Minister of Justice announced that he intended to release Sobukwe "subject to such restrictions as are necessary for the safety of the state".

Nine years ago Sobukwe, President of the South African Pan-African Congress, was sentenced to three years imprisonment for "incitement" in the massacre at Sharpeville where 72 Africans were killed by South African police. Sharpeville day, March 21st, has become an international day of opposition to all forms of discrimination and is so recognised by the United Nations.

In court Sobukwe refused to plead. He argued that since the African has no say in the making of the laws under which he is charged he could neither recognise the laws nor the Courts which sought to enforce them. Before his sentence expired in 1963 the South African government rushed through section 6 of the General Amendment Act, now known as the "Sobukwe clause". Under this clause the regime orders, with parliamentary approval, a further year's detention for Sobukwe. This legal procedure is unprecedented in South African and modern history.

Sobukwe is visited monthly by his wife who reports of his failing health but high morale. As a lecturer at Witwatersrand University before his imprisonment Sobukwe is an intellectual and a thinker. He believes in non racialism and argues that in South Africa the freedom of the African peoples means freedom for all in South Africa including the Europeans. He stands for the establishment of a democracy in which all men will be citizens of a common state and live and be governed as individuals not as racial groups.

During his first three years imprisonment Sobukwe was badly treated but now, having survived the years and the humiliations, he is again studying. As an "external"

student from London University he has just been awarded his BSc. (Economics) degree and has now turned to other academic subjects to keep him mentally alert in the apparently endless years of restraint.

Sobukwe is one of South Africa's great men. His long detention; the special law which has to be passed annually, his continued world support; all pay tribute to the man, the principles for which he stands and the oppression which he opposes.

Sobukwe is an adopted Prisoner of Conscience. The Government has not said whether they would be willing to allow him to leave South Africa if he wishes to do so, and the restrictions he may now face are themselves a severe limitation on both physical and mental freedom.

South East Asia

AMNESTY has always accepted that its resources are limited and that its main efforts should be concentrated in regions where it can be most effective. South East Asia has hitherto been relatively neglected as it has been difficult to obtain reliable information and to establish contacts with unbiased observers.

The purpose of this article is to examine the differences between individual countries in Asia and at the same time to suggest common principles for Amnesty work.

In **Burma** the great majority of prisoners of conscience known to Amnesty were released last year. Some of the U Nu group have even been brought into government organisations. Others have gone into the monkhood and then retired to private life, while several of the Shan leaders have been allowed to emigrate. Most of the remaining political prisoners are associated either with the pro-Pekin guerillas or with the armed Kaye and Kachin rebellions. One minor problem is that the best information about Burmese prisoners can often be obtained through British sources but British intervention is often resented because of its ex-colonial status and because British and American missionaries were thought to have encouraged Shan, Karen and Kachin separation.

Siam has recently had a relatively free election and the new constitution is expected to lead to the end of martial law. There are at present no prominent prisoners of conscience as there were in Marshal Sarit's day, although no one claims that there is complete freedom of expression.

The Malaysian and Singapore Governments have little or no complex about Britain as an ex-colonial power. On the contrary British press comment is eagerly scrutinised.

Malaysia presents a special problem since race and politics are so closely intermingled and politicians, both government and opposition, may be tempted to arouse racial passions which almost inevitably lead to violence. Amnesty has always understood that governments may have to use preventive detention if there is a genuine risk that a politician will instigate violence, but there are two particular dangers. First, it all too easily leads to the suppression of any type of opposition that seems likely to arouse popular support. Secondly, the very act of detaining a popular leader is likely to create the very violence that it was meant to avert. Both Malaysia and Singapore will repay careful attention. Provided Amnesty chooses its cases carefully it can well be effective especially as so many local lawyers and politicians know of the work of Amnesty International.

For practical purposes Amnesty can hope to be most effective in **Vietnam** in connection with cases which may appeal to American public opinion. In South Vietnam, the Saigon government is obviously concerned to maintain a good public image in the U.S.A. and there are several cases where advocates of negotiation have been put under arrest which would be worth following up provided the information sources are reliable.

Indonesia will be the subject of a special Amnesty mission later this year and will, therefore, have special treatment in another issue of AIR.

South East Asia cannot be summarised or generalised. The difference between countries and the problems are as vast as the gap between, say, Spain and Sweden. It is for Amnesty and its groups and national sections to find the most effective way of influencing governments with prisoners of conscience. There is no easy answer and no answer which covers all of this geographical area.

R.S.

Conscientious Objectors in Spain

Murder your neighbour, rob his bank, rape his daughter . . . but don't refuse to shoulder a gun for Franco unless you're prepared to spend the next twenty years in gaol.

Not that a military court ever passes such a sentence on a conscientious objector—it does not recognise that such a being exists. As soon as a young Spaniard gets his call-up papers he is in the Army; and when he goes to the barracks and tells them that his beliefs don't allow him to don a uniform he is simply a soldier who is "wilfully disobeying an order". He is promptly marched to the guardroom, put under close arrest and kept there to await a court martial.

He is found guilty and sent to prison for three years. When he comes out, he is again called up, again he refuses and the solemn judicial farce is repeated, only this time he gets four years. By the time the next court martial sits down to judge him he has been classified as a persistent offender deserving the maximum sentence—and back he goes to the cells, this time for six years. This continuous punishment of a religious sincerity that is so pointedly inoffensive lasts until the believer is too old for military service—when he is forty.

Amnesty has the names of ninety of this very pure breed of prisoner of conscience. They are Jehovah's Witnesses. Their beliefs are of the Bible but, ironically, this earns them no mercy in the most self-consciously Christian country in Europe.

Yet in 1965, the Vatican Council at last recommended that the laws of the state should include some recognition of conscientious objectors, even if this meant their doing some form of alternative service. And the Concordat made with the Holy See in August, 1953, affirmed Spanish loyalty to the Church of Rome.

There have been signs, this last year, of a slow awakening of conscience in Madrid. The new Military Service Law predictably contained no mention of objecting pacifists; but the problem they create is now thought important enough for a committee of the Cortes to seek a solution to it which will "safeguard human rights and satisfy the interests of justice and patriotism".

The obvious solution will do all this. Let C.O.'s opt for labouring in construction camps, as in France. And if they refuse even this, let them go to prison for as long a time as they would have spent in the Army—or even a bit longer. But the Spanish Government must stop repeatedly calling them up and then treating each refusal as a separate offence. That's what Amnesty must work for.

BERT LODGE

Jews in Poland

THE outbreak of war in the Middle East in 1967 had unexpected repercussions in Poland. Although there are only about 30,000 Polish Jews (the majority have perished in Nazi concentration camps), a faction within the Polish government headed by General Moczar, Minister of the Interior, made a major national issue of the question of Jewish loyalties to the State. In a speech in October, 1967, General Moczar denounced Polish Jews who had supported Israel in the six day war and denounced Israel as Hitlerite and an ally of the West German "revanchists". Earlier, in June, Prime Minister Gomulka had himself criticised "Zionist" Jews who had emptied bottles to celebrate "Israeli aggression". Jews who wished to emigrate to Israel were free to do so but those wishing to remain must recognise that their loyalty was to Poland exclusively. No "fifth column" in Poland was wanted.

Soon, Zionism came to be attacked and denounced by all the mass media in Poland, and between 1967 and 1968 many observers were at a loss to understand what was happening. It was hard to comprehend why "Zionists" as such constituted a threat to Poland and it was certainly difficult to anticipate an alliance between the extreme right wing elements in West Germany who wanted to revise the Polish German borders (revanchists) and either Zionists abroad or the Polish Jews, both of whom still have only too clear a memory of German atrocities. It was soon evident that "Zionism" was a euphemism and risked meaning simply "Jews".

In March, 1968, the Polish students were involved in major clashes with the authorities. Although sparked off by the suppression of a Mickiewicz play, the riots were denounced as "Zionist inspired" and of the 20 alleged ringleaders detained for trial all but one were apparently of Jewish origin. The trials themselves were held in secret and Amnesty failed to get an observer into the court or even into Poland. Spaced well apart, presumably, to avoid publicity, the trials are still continuing in April, 1969.

There are signs that the "anti-Zionist" or, as many feel, "anti-semitic" campaigns are now ended but the costs are difficult to assess. At least half the Jewish population have left the country, mostly for Israel (they cannot, in practice, apply to emigrate anywhere else) and the encouragement given to already existent but suppressed prejudice is impossible to evaluate. Anti-semitism in Catholic Poland was well established before and during the war but was certainly not apparent in the early fifties. Jewish communists played a vital part in the establishment of the present regime and anticipated no return to the fears of the thirties and forties when the minorities were pestered, victimised and finally slaughtered.

There are various explanations offered for the revival by General Moczar and his friends of anti-semitism or at least anti-Zionism. There is a feeling that the influence of Jews in the Communist Party has been disproportionate to their numbers. Or again it may have been part of a subtle campaign to oust Gomulka, whose wife is Jewish. It may simply be that resentment was felt at the attention paid to the suffering and heroism of the Jews during the war to the exclusion of the non-Jewish nationalists such as Moczar, who fought bravely against the Germans. Whatever the causes, Gomulka now appears to have realised its danger and has attacked the "excesses" but not before many Jews had lost their jobs and been replaced by non-Jews.

The insecurity created among minorities by outbursts of this type of prejudice is difficult to remove. The existence of a central office in Warsaw investigating peoples backgrounds, searching for Jewish ancestry, will take a lot of forgetting and explaining.

And, of course, most important from Amnesty's point of view, there are Jewish prisoners. Not overtly imprisoned because they are Jewish but the coincidence of religious origin is too hard to accept as an irrelevance to the trials and sentence. While factions within governments are prepared to use prejudice as an instrument in national politics no-one can be safe from the fear of mass hysteria, grumbling discrimination and positive victimisation.

BRUCE LAIRD

Book Review

PRISONERS OF HATE is a documentary account of the treatment of some twelve Israelis in Syrian prisons between 1957—1963. Appalling filth, starvation, beatings, electric shock treatments; it is all described as meted out by brutish jailers. Not only Israelis suffered—also Syrian Arab political prisoners particularly from amongst the minority group of the Druzes. Changes at the “top” brought occasional but temporary respite. Prisoners thus tortured and completely isolated from the outside world soon succumb to mental illness and complete psychological breakdown. It is a horrifying story of human disintegration—among jailers as well as prisoners.

The most terrifying aspect of it all is that these are forgotten men; for with such instability of government, who will or can take responsibility to remember and to act? It took four years after the first hints were given for the prisoners to be finally exchanged and released.

It is for these forgotten and broken men that Amnesty was established. Unfortunately this story does not only happen in one country.

CONVOYS LTD.
6 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4

FLE 4060

Travel agents in all parts of the world.

Why not book your journeys through us?

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL does.

Books

PRISONERS OF HATE

The story of Israelis in Syrian jails.

Yehezkel Hameiri.

Price, Israeli pounds, 9.75

Available from Keter Books, P.O. Box 7145, Jerusalem, Israel.

THE RIGHT TO REFUSE MILITARY SERVICE AND ORDERS

A Working Paper edited by the International Peace Bureau—1968.

(120 Pages)

Price 10/-

Address—41 rue de Zurich, Geneva, Switzerland.

CONSCRIPTION — A WORLD SURVEY

By Devi Prasad and Tony Smythe.

(167 Pages)

Price 15/-

Published by War Resisters' International—1968.

Address—3 Caledonian Road, London, N.1.

ALL THREE PUBLICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM ANY
OF THE ADDRESSES

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION — A HUMAN RIGHT

By Pat May.

(21 Pages)

Price 3/6

Published by Amnesty International—1968

Address—Turnagain Lane, Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

SOUTH AFRICA: the violence of Apartheid

By A. Sachs.

4/6

RHODESIA: why minority rule survived

2/6

Both these publications are obtainable from:

International Defence and Aid Fund, 2 Amen Court, London, E.C.4.

If Groups read the Booklet they will get answers to many of the questions which they regularly put to the International Secretariat.