

certitude and peace for anyone who can fight his way free of their confusion. The worst they can do is bring death upon us and death is of little consequence. Destruction of the body cannot touch the deepest centre of life.

When will the bombs fall? Who shall say? Perhaps Gog and Magog have yet to perfect their policies and their weapons. Perhaps they want to do a neat and masterly job, dropping 'clean' bombs, without fallout. It sounds clinical to the point of humanitarian kindness. It is all a lovely, humane piece of surgery. Prompt, efficacious, sterile, pure. That of course was the ideal of the Nazis who conducted the extermination camps twenty years ago: but of course they had not progressed as far as we have. They devoted themselves dutifully to a disgusting job which could never be performed under perfect clinical conditions. Yet they did their best. Gog and Magog will develop the whole thing to its ultimate refinement. I hear they are working on a bomb that will destroy nothing but life. Men, animals, birds, perhaps also vegetation. But it will leave buildings, factories, railways, natural resources. Only one further step, and the weapon will be one of absolute perfection. It should destroy books, works of art, musical instruments, toys, tools and gardens, and spare flags, weapons, gallows, electric chairs, gas chambers, instruments of torture and plenty of strait jackets for the insane. Then the era of love can finally begin. Atheistic humanism can take over.

## Appeal for Amnesty

PETER BENENSON

It has been said that the 'political prisoner' is the symbol of this second half of the twentieth century. In a sense this is correct, but it is probably truer to say that political imprisonment is the most important social evil which civilization has as yet failed to tackle. In the thirties the predominant social evil was that of unemployment, in the forties it was hunger and in the fifties the immense problem of the homeless refugee. In each case public opinion coalesced to oblige governments to work

together for a solution. It is now a recognized part of the obligations of a government to provide employment for its citizens. Through the United Nations and other inter-governmental agencies the world has assumed the obligation to provide food for the hungry. More recently, through the organization of World Refugee Year, a great effort was made to find homes for the human jetsam left over from the last war. Although the problem of the refugee remains, it has now become generally accepted that each country should feel it a moral obligation to provide shelter and work for those without any country of their own.

'Appeal for Amnesty' is an attempt to persuade civilized opinion throughout the world that there is an obligation on us all to prevent the persecution of people on account of their opinions. Like World Refugee Year the idea of this Appeal originated in Britain. It was launched by a small group of lawyers and writers on Trinity Sunday, 1961; since then it has found an echo in every continent. Significantly, much of the answering support has come from active Christians, for the central theme of Christianity is the purblind persecution of good by evil, of God by man. And Christians of all denominations have realized that when one just man is unjustly imprisoned, God Himself is offended. For, as Jesus said, 'In as much as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren . . . ye did it unto me.' At the present time practising Christians are the largest single body of people suffering for their convictions. Catholics will naturally think of the bishops, priests and religious imprisoned east of the Iron Curtain. Other denominations suffer in different countries, such as the Baptists in Spain, Angola and Colombia. And all who try to practise Christ's gospel of love find themselves subjected to social ostracism, if not to physical restraint, in those areas where a white-skinned minority is trying to perpetuate its rule of a dark-skinned majority—in Algeria, South Africa and the Southern States of the U.S.A.

Despite the greater freedom of communication there has probably never been, since the early days of the Roman Empire, a period when the preaching of the gospel was more difficult in practice. Christian religious education is forbidden by law in areas populated by just under a half of the world's population. In growing areas of Africa and Asia white-skinned missionaries are shunned as 'colonialist agents'; even in traditionally Catholic Latin America the Church is subjected to increasing antagonism from the new movements of agrarian reform. In Western Europe and U.S.A., the rising tempo of re-armament has led

to friction with those Christian denominations which are wholly pacifist in their outlook.

The difficulties which face the preaching of the Christian religion are part and parcel of the ever-increasing power of the centralized state. The late dictator Trujillo, who is said once to have petitioned the Pope for the title 'Defensor Fidei', turned against the Church when a pastoral letter from the San Domingan bishops dared to criticize his social policy. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, brought up as a Catholic, found the Church's discipline excessive when it impinged upon what he considers to be the limitless prerogatives of the President. These are merely two examples of the recent growth of the one-party state—a development which is by no means confined to only one side of the Iron Curtain. The vigorous letter of protest recently signed by 339 Basque priests is another feature of the clash between the Church's endeavour to preserve the dignity of the individual and the over-weening power of a centralized bureaucracy. As year succeeds year an ever greater number of states tighten the control of opinion, so that those who insist upon their conscientious right to speak freely find themselves progressively coerced. And with modern methods of passports and frontier controls, it becomes harder for those individuals who find the degree of coercion intolerable to seek refuge outside their own country. The honourable tradition of political asylum developed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came to a final halt in front of the wall across Berlin.

'Appeal for Amnesty' is an endeavour to illustrate the dangerous potentialities of a situation in which public opinion has come to accept any law passed by a properly constituted legislature as automatically valid. Put in another way, 'Appeal for Amnesty' represents a call for a return to the principles of 'natural justice' as evolved by Aquinas. It takes as its central proposition the only existing universally-accepted body of 'natural law,' the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And it concentrates in particular on Articles 18 and 19, which guarantee to every human being freedom of speech, of opinion and of religion. It is an appeal to civilized opinion all over the world to bring pressure on legislators to insure that these articles are effectively guaranteed in international and in municipal law.

It is now thirteen years since the Universal Declaration was proclaimed on 10 December 1948. Unfortunately, attempts by delegations at the United Nations to agree upon any effective machinery to implement the Declaration, and to guarantee its articles, have met with

no greater success than the disarmament talks. After thirteen years the delegates are still talking. Only in Europe has some headway been made. The Council of Europe has set up a Commission and a Court to guarantee the European Convention of Human Rights, which is a less ambitious and rather more workmanlike document than the Universal Declaration. Those member nations of the Council which have ratified the Convention and accepted all its optional articles, permit their citizens to obtain international enforcement of their domestic rights. It was in this way that the Irish detainee, Lawless, and the Belgian wartime collaborator, De Bekker, were able to bring their complaints to a public hearing—at Strasbourg. And, significantly, the pressure of publicity brought a restoration of civil rights to both of them.

One of the major objectives of the 'Appeal for Amnesty' is to secure the adhesion of all West European countries to this international system of Human Rights' enforcement. Ironically, the two countries with the greatest tradition of civil liberty remain outside: France has refused to ratify the Convention at all, Britain has not yet recognized the jurisdiction of the European Court.

In the long run the only effective way of guaranteeing individual human rights against excessive state control is by international judicial machinery. It is the hope of those who launched 'Appeal for Amnesty' that it will be possible in the coming years to mobilize public opinion to insist upon the establishment of machinery similar to the European Court in all continents. In the meantime the task is to stir the public conscience and to relieve the suffering of all those 'prisoners of conscience' outside the arm of the infant Court at Strasbourg. As it happens, these two objectives can best be achieved by a single policy—that of publicizing the plight of those who are being persecuted. Following this policy, 'Appeal for Amnesty' has collected details of a large number of cases of victimization. Since the 'Prisoners of Conscience Library' was founded six months ago, case histories have been collected of some 840 such prisoners in forty-one countries. Thanks to the assistance of newspapers, magazines, radio and television programmes, it has been possible to publicize the details of some of the worst of these cases. And with the ever-widening publicity support has come for the idea of a permanent international movement in defence of freedom of opinion and religion.

This breadth and enthusiasm of support has led to the establishment of an international organization bearing the single-word title of AMNESTY. For the time being it has its headquarters in London, where

the Prisoners of Conscience Library is situated. National Sections are in the process of formation; some Sections have already started to work. The basic unit of each national organization is a local group which will make itself responsible for 'adopting' three prisoners (one from the East, one from the West and one from Afro-Asia), for the relief of destitution of prisoners' families and for collecting funds to permit the international organization to send responsible 'ambassadors' to make inquiries and representations about individual prisoners.

The first international activity of the AMNESTY Movement—and one which it is hoped will be repeated on an ever-widening scale each year—was the commemoration of Human Rights Day. This day, 10 December, has been set aside by the United Nations for commemoration because it is the anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration. Until now it has remained to all intents and purposes an unnoticed day. It is the intention of AMNESTY to focus attention on the Universal Declaration—and, in particular, on the need to implement it—by ceremonies of a dignified character. The central feature of these ceremonies, many of which will be conducted in churches, is the offering of prayers on behalf of the persecuted and the lighting of the AMNESTY Candle of Remembrance—a candle entwined by a coil of barbed wire. On each Human Rights Day special publicity will be given to one 'forgotten prisoner'—a symbol of an unknown number, perhaps as many as one million, perhaps more.

Last year, 1961, the living symbol was Christopher Lindi Payi. He was born in South Africa twenty-eight years ago, of dark skin. Having obtained a degree in South Africa, he found his way of advancement blocked because of the colour of his skin. Offered a scholarship to do post-graduate work at a Nigerian University, he applied for an exit permit. This was refused; ultimately he was permitted to leave the country on condition of his abandoning his nationality and right to return. He boarded a ship which took him as far as Sao Thome in Portuguese West Africa, there to tranship to Nigeria. Scarcely had he landed on Portuguese soil when his papers were found to be defective—he no longer had any citizenship—and he was arrested as a suspected Angolan terrorist. Handed over to the P.I.D.E. (Portuguese Political Police), he was sent to Lisbon to prison; and there he remained since April without charge. He has no nationality, and no Government was prepared to intervene on his behalf.

As the proofs of this article were being corrected, the news arrived

that, following wide publicity of his case, Christopher Payi had been released.

Those interested in joining AMNESTY may do so by sending a minimum annual contribution of £1, which entitles them to the quarterly bulletin, notices of conferences, of the Human Rights Day ceremonies and the right to use the Library. The address is 1 Mitre Court Buildings, Temple, E.C.4.

## North American: II— The Church

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The figures of course are formidable. And the European enquirer can be mesmerized by the catalogue of Catholic achievement in the United States: a population now of forty-five million, with 55,000 priests, 170,000 religious sisters (of whom nearly 100,000 teach in schools), 267 universities and colleges with more than 300,000 students, 10,000 elementary schools with over four million pupils, 850 hospitals of every sort in which more than fourteen million patients were treated in 1960. In the same year nearly 132,000 converts were received into the Church.

The statistics matter, if only because they are the staring facts that declare the vitality of the Church in the only way it can be externally measured. They indicate something too, of the astounding generosity of American Catholics, who, with no help from public funds, have built up a system of churches and schools unparalleled in the Church's history. But the Church is not merely a corporation to be surveyed in terms of its efficiency or of the successful image it presents to the world. It is easy for the visitor from an older and more casual society to wonder a little at the signs of a high-powered organization—the discreet hum of the electric typewriters in the carpeted rooms of the chancery offices, the multitude of monsignori bearing their hide brief-cases, the jet black Chryslers—and to see in it all the ecclesiastical equivalent of the sort of business set-up commended by *Fortune* magazine. Unhappily