

THE OBSERVER WEEKEND REVIEW

London, Sunday, May 28, 1961



SIX POLITICAL PRISONERS: left, Constantino Nolas, the philosopher, now in a Hungarian prison; centre, the Rev. Adrian Jones, friend of the Negroes, recently in gaol in the United States; right, Agostino Neto, Angolan poet and doctor, held without trial by the Portuguese. Their cases are described in the article below.



Left, Archbishop Bernini of Prague, held in custody by the Czechs; centre, Toni Linnahala, the Greek Communist and trade unionist prisoner, whose wife, in English; right, Cardinal Madzudzany, Primate of Hungary, prisoner and now a political refugee trapped in the United States Embassy, Budapest.

ON BOTH SIDES of the Iron Curtain, thousands of men and women are being held in gaol without trial because their political or religious views differ from those of their Governments. Peter Benenson, a London lawyer, conceived the idea of a world campaign, APPEAL FOR AMNESTY, 1961, to urge Governments to release these people or at least give them a fair trial. The campaign opens to-day and "The Observer" is glad to offer it a platform.

The Forgotten Prisoners

OPEN your newspaper any day of the week and you will find a report from somewhere in the world of someone being imprisoned, tortured or executed because his opinions or religion are unacceptable to his government. There are several million such people in prison—by no means all of them behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains—and their numbers are growing. The newspaper reader feels a sickening sense of impotence. Yet if these feelings of disgust all over the world could be united into common action, something effective could be done.

In 1945 the founder members of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 18—Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom either alone or in company with others in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19—Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. There is at present no sure way of finding out how many countries permit their citizens to enjoy these two fundamental freedoms. What matters is not the rights that exist on paper in the Constitution, but whether they can be exercised and enforced in practice. No government, for instance, is at greater pains to emphasise its constitutional guarantees than the Spanish, but it fails to apply them.

There is a growing tendency all over the world to disguise the real grounds upon which "non-conformists" are imprisoned. In Spain, students who circulate leaflets calling for the right to hold discussions in current affairs are charged with military "rebellion". In Hungary, Catholic priests who have tried to keep their churches open have been charged with "anti-State activities". These cover-up charges indicate that governments are by no means insensitive to the pressure of public opinion. And when world opinion is concentrated on one weak spot, it can sometimes succeed in making a government relent. For instance, the Hungarian poet, Tibor Dery, was recently released after the formation of "Tibor Dery committees" in many countries; and Professor Tierno Galvan and his literary friends were acquitted in Spain this March, after the arrival of some distinguished foreign observers.

London office to gather facts

The important thing is to mobilise public opinion quickly, and widely, before a government is caught up in the vicious spiral caused by its own repression, and is faced with impending civil war. By then the situation will have become too desperate for the government to make concessions. The force of opinion, to be effective, should be broadly based, international, non-sectarian and all-party. Campaigns in favour of freedom brought by one country, or party, against another, often achieve nothing but an intensification of repression.

That is why we have started Appeal for Amnesty, 1961. The important thing is to mobilise public opinion quickly, and widely, before a government is caught up in the vicious spiral caused by its own repression, and is faced with impending civil war. By then the situation will have become too desperate for the government to make concessions. The force of opinion, to be effective, should be broadly based, international, non-sectarian and all-party. Campaigns in favour of freedom brought by one country, or party, against another, often achieve nothing but an intensification of repression.

campaign which opens today, is the result of an initiative by a group of lawyers, writers and publishers in London, who share an underlying conviction expressed by Voltaire: "I dissent from your faith, but am prepared to die for your right to express it." We have set up an office in London to collect information about the names, numbers and conditions of what we have decided to call "Prisoners of Conscience," and we define them thus: "Any person who is physically restrained by imprisonment or otherwise from expressing (in any form of words or symbols) any opinion which he honestly holds and which does not advocate or condone personal violence." We also exclude those who have conspired with a foreign government to overthrow their own. Our office will from time to time hold Press conferences to focus attention on Prisoners of Conscience selected impartially from different parts of the world. And it will provide factual information to any group, existing or new, in any part of the world, which decides to join in a special effort in favour of freedom of opinion or religion.

In October, a Penguin Special called "Persecution 1961" will be published as part of our Amnesty campaign. In it are stories of nine men and women of different parts of the world, of varying political and religious outlook, who have been suffering imprisonment for expressing their opinions. None of them is a professional politician; all of them are professional people. The opinions which have brought them in prison are the common coinage of argument in free societies.

Post flogged in front of family

One story is of the revolting brutality with which Angola's leading poet, Agostino Neto, was treated before the present disturbances there broke out. Dr. Neto was one of the few African doctors in Angola. His efforts to improve the health services for his fellow Africans were unacceptable to the Portuguese. In June last year the Political Police marched into his house, had him flogged in front of his family and then dragged away. He has since been in prison in the Cape Verde Isles without charge or trial.

From Rumania, we shall print the story of Constantino Nolas, the philosopher, who was sentenced to twenty-five years' imprisonment because, while "justified," his friends and pupils continued to visit him, to listen to his talk on philosophy and literature. The book will also tell of the Spanish lawyer, Antonio

Amari, who tried to build a coalition of democratic groups, and has been in prison without trial since November, 1958, and two white men persecuted by their own race for teaching that the coloured race should have equal rights. Ashton Jones, the sixty-five-year-old minister who last year was repeatedly beaten-up, and three "times" imprisoned in Louisiana and Texas for doing what the Freedom Riders are now doing in Alabama; and Patrick Duncan, the son of a former South African Governor-General, who, after three days in prison, has just been served with an order forbidding him from attending or addressing any meeting for the year.

Find out who is in gaol

The technique of publishing the personal stories of a number of prisoners of conscience is a new one; it has been adopted to avoid the fate of previous amnesty campaigns, which so often have become concerned with publicising the political views of the imprisoned, than with humanitarian freedom.

How can we discover the cause of freedom in the world today? The American philosopher, John Dewey, says: "If you want to establish some conception of society, you find out what is wrong with it."

Appeal for Amnesty, 1961

- 1. To work impartially for the release of prisoners of conscience for their opinions.
- 2. To seek for them a fair and public trial.
- 3. To enlarge the right of Amnesty and help political refugees to find work.
- 4. To urge effective international machinery to guarantee freedom of opinion.

who is in gaol. This is hard to do, because there are few governments which welcome inquiries about the number of Prisoners of Conscience they hold in custody. But neither fact nor opinion can help unless the Press is allowed to criticise the government. Even many democratic governments are surprisingly sensitive to Press criticism. In France, General de Gaulle has introduced newspaper seizures, a policy he inherited from the Fourth Republic. In Britain, and the United States occasional attempts are made to draw the sting of Press criticism by the technique of taking editors into confidence about a "security device" as in the Hikka spy case.

Within the British Commonwealth, the Government of Ceylon has launched an attack on the Press, and is threatening to take the whole industry under public control. In Pakistan the Press is at the mercy of the Martial Law administration. In Ghana, the opposition Press operates under great restrictions. In South Africa, which leaves the Commonwealth on Wednesday, the government is planning further legislation to censor publications. Outside the Commonwealth, Press freedom is especially in peril in Indonesia, the Arab world, and Latin America. Communist countries, and the Soviet and Polish "Proletarianism of the Government" is rarely tolerated.

Churchill's dilemma on democracy

Another test of freedom is whether the government permits political refugees to enter the country. We have seen the spread of "personal regimes" across Asia and Africa. Whenever an opposition party is prevented from putting up candidates, or from making speeches, there is much more than its own future at stake. Multi-party elections may be conducted, but the risk of coalition makes for unstable government. But no other way has yet been found of guaranteeing freedom to minorities or safety to non-conformists. "Whatever trials there may be in the old remark that democracy does not fit well with emergent nationalism, we should also remember Winston Churchill's dictum: "Democracy is a damned bad system of government, but nobody has thought of it better."

A fourth test of freedom is whether those accused of offences against the State receive a speedy and public trial before an impartial court; whether they are allowed to call witnesses.

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lawyer is able to present the defence as the way he thinks best. In recent years there has been a regrettable trend in some of those countries that are still possessing an independent judiciary: by declaring a state of emergency and taking their opponents into "preventive detention," governments have sidestepped the need to make and prove criminal charges. At the other extreme there is the enthusiasm in Soviet countries for institutions which, though called courts, are really nothing of the sort. The so-called "comradely courts" in the U.S.S.R., which have power to deal with "parasites," are in essence little more than departments of the Ministry of Labour.

China holds in Siberia, in the transmigration of labour by an allegedly judicial process in a gigantic scale. The most rapid way of bringing the test of Conscience is by publicising, especially by using their fellow-citizens. With the pressure of emergent nationalism and the lessons of the Cold War there are, however, some limitations where governments are not able to take emergency measures to protect their interests. It is vital that public opinion should insist that these measures should not be excessive, nor prolonged after the moment of danger. If the emergency is to last a long time, then a government should be induced to allow its opponents out of prison to seek asylum abroad.

Frontier control more efficient

Although there are no statistics, it is likely that recent years have seen a steady decrease in the number of people teaching asylum. This is not much due to the unwillingness of other countries to offer shelter, as to the greatly increased efficiency of frontier control, which today makes it harder for people to get away. Attempts to reach agreement on asylum at United Nations have dragged on for many years with little result.

There is also the problem of labour restrictions on immigrants in many countries. So long as work is not available in the host countries, the right of asylum is largely empty. Appeal for Amnesty, 1961, aims to draw attention to these countries, and to urge that, wherever possible, employment for political and religious refugees should be guaranteed each host country a central employment office for these people, and to set up a central office of the employers' federations, the business and the Ministry of Labour.

In Britain there are many firms

will be able to give out translation and correspondence work to refugees, but no industry has stepped forward to do so. Those regimes that refuse to allow their candidates for asylum on the ground that they go abroad only to conspire, might be less reluctant if they knew that, on arrival, the refugees would not be making their beds in a dreary institution. The members of the Council of Europe have agreed a Convention of Human Rights, and the use of a commission to secure its enforcement. Some countries have accorded to their citizens the right to approach the commission individually. But some, including Britain, have refused to accept the jurisdiction of the commission, or to secure its enforcement. The members of the Council of Europe have agreed a Convention of Human Rights, and the use of a commission to secure its enforcement. Some countries have accorded to their citizens the right to approach the commission individually. But some, including Britain, have refused to accept the jurisdiction of the commission, or to secure its enforcement.

The success of the 1961 Amnesty Campaign depends on how hardy and powerful it is possible to rally public opinion. This is possible, too, if the campaign is being all-embracing in its composition, international in character and politically impartial in direction. Any group welcome to take part which is prepared to condemn persecution regardless of where it occurs, who is responsible or what are the ideas suppressed. How much can be achieved when men and women of good will unite was shown during World Refugee Year. Inevitably most of the action called for by Appeal for Amnesty, 1961, can only be taken by government. But existing governments are prepared to follow only where public opinion leads. Pressure of opinion a hundred years ago brought about the emancipation of slaves in the West, for men to insist upon the same freedom for his mind as he has won for his body.

PETER BENENSON

By Harry Pilkington, Pilkington Bros. Ltd., says—

The New Scientist is helping to bring the opportunities and the challenge of the present scientific revolution in industry before a wider public, to show scientists the shape of the world into which their own activities must fit, and to stimulate national and better interest in science.

Over half of those things that are now regarded as essential to our modern standard of life are new inventions of this century which have been made possible by the discovery of a 16th-century medieval student.

Sportswear for the inactive by Katharine Waterston

A girl's best friend by Elizabeth Guadrey

Miserable married women by Dilys Rowe

Time Off on the Boards by Pierre d'Arconnot

FADE OUT ALL FAULTS FOR THE YOUNG FRESH LOOK

The perfect make-up is invisible... concealing faults, smoothing out wrinkles and furrows, blending naturally. Two steps achieve this new, young look. First, smooth on Coty Instant Beauty, liquid make-up that exactly matches your skin tone. Then—and this is the magic... AIRSPUN BEAUTY POWDER feather-light and fluffy, so fine it can't be seen... gives a poreless, flawless translucence. No other cosmetic can add more beauty to your skin.

COTY "AIRSPUN" BEAUTY POWDER



INSTANT BEAUTY Tinted Make-up, covers shadows and lines, blends with your skin, spreads smoothly and evenly. 6 g AIRSPUN BEAUTY POWDER, so fine, so clinging, so very flattering. 5 g

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Budin's new image

The second of "The Observer's" picture reports on aspects of the English Summer deals with a witty, but paradoxically Marxist concept of capitalism. It also reveals a subtle change in the technique of holiday-staying.

Saving the white rhino

by Colin Parnham

MOCCANO NOTEBOOK

by Hugh Massingham

The new Glyndebourne

by Peter Heyworth

TELEVISION

by Richard Richardson on "The Village Viewers"

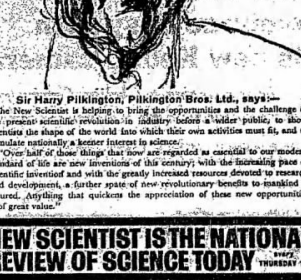
PARIS PERSPECTIVE

A new monthly report by Barbara Bray

Today's Television & Sound Radio

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