

Amnesty International
Research Department

To: All national sections and groups with Brazilian prisoners
From: Research Department - Brazil (Tracy Ulltveit-Moe & Maggie Beirne)
Date: 6th June 1973

New Perspectives on our work for Brazil

Individual groups often become discouraged when they receive no news about their own prisoner, or any indication that their efforts have had any effect. However, the International Secretariat has the advantage of following all of our cases on Brazil, and we have been very encouraged lately to note that many 'breakthroughs' have been made. Probably as a result of widespread dissemination of the Brazil report, we have been receiving material from entirely new areas in Brazil, sometimes concerning very concrete new cases. This enables us to act quickly and with fuller facts than has sometimes been the case in the past. Too, we have recently received some very encouraging feed-back concerning both ongoing cases as well as, thanks to ex-prisoners of conscience who feel our work was helpful in securing better treatment and/or release for them, possibilities for sending aid to Brazil for prisoners and their families are on the increase.

We have also felt that international interest in Brazil is continually more in evidence and we have thus been able to place more press material than ever before in recent months. We notice too that many more theatrical, literary, T.V. and film projects are underway concerning Brazil, and as Amnesty's work on that country is apparently becoming better known, we have been able to supply material to many persons engaged on such projects.

In order to give groups, who may not have had a break-through on their own case, a wider picture of the importance and effect of our work in Brazil, we have collected together for your information some quotes from recent letters. Where necessary for the safety of the persons involved, names or places have been blanked out.

1. A released prisoner writes to us having left Brazil:

"... I returned a few months ago from Brazil where I spent some time in various prisons as a political prisoner.

During my last period of incarceration it came to my attention in About September 1972, that Amnesty International had sent a letter or letters expressing concern on my behalf. I want to thank you now since I could not reply at the time. Later I had the opportunity to become acquainted with the activities of Amnesty International.

I wish to express my deep gratitude for your concern over the state of justice or lack of it as manifested in the fate of political prisoners.

If there is anything I can do to contribute to the work of your organisation, please contact me.

Accept my thanks on my own behalf and that of many companions who are still in the prisons of Brazil."

2. After the release of a prisoner, a group continued their investigations and were eventually able to contact the mother of their prisoner. They learned from a contact in Brazil that:

".. The mother told that, immediately after the arrest, they had noticed that an international organisation took interest in the case. She had wanted to inform them about the release, but as she had no details about the organisation, she did not do so. She let me know that she experienced it as support and she thanked me for the organisation's efforts, which I pass on. I am happy A. is free! .."

3. A released couple, now in Chile, write:

"Dear friend, Please excuse the familiarity of this letter. However, after all that we know of the work and the unceasing efforts which you undertook to secure our release, we feel that it would be a little artificial to treat you formally, because of all the friendship that we feel for you .."

4. A released student hopes to come to Europe to study:

"I was so happy to receive your last letter. When my father first received a letter from abroad, we were frightened, but then we became happy to learn that people in other countries cared about me. I want to stay in touch with you always, and I am very happy to think about the possibility to go to Europe, especially if the dream that one can speak as one wants there, and one can change one's ideas is true - all of which is impossible here ..."

For my wife and I, nothing would be better than to be able to study in your country. That is something I have always dreamed of ... if we can obtain a study grant, we will work at no matter what in order to have the chance to study.

I will do my best to stay in contact with you always ... I thank you again for your interest; our joy, our desire to be with you is stronger all of the time ... it is so good to think that one day we will speak face to face."

5. A priest has received letters from Amnesty groups asking for information on particular cases. He writes:

"Dear friend, You must excuse me for not answering sooner. There is certainly no lack here of events, and prisoners. I am very satisfied with your letter, and the accompanying information. I thank you for your friendship and your service to the cause of human liberty. I strongly promise my friendship in return.

Our correspondence is very controlled. So, it wouldn't be wise for me to give an address, even for a cause as noble as your own. I'm sure you will understand.

Your friendship, the actions taken by Amnesty, are an aid for all of those who fight for their brothers.

Pray for us ... best greetings from your friend. .../...

6. A Brazilian church figure questioned about a particular case answers that "Mr. ... is free now, thanks to international pressure".

7. Relatives of a presently adopted Amnesty prisoner of conscience wrote recently to say that the director of the prison where the prisoner is held only allowed visits after the arrival of letters from Amnesty International. The relatives' letter concludes: "We thank you for your interest and support".

8. In a letter from the father of a prisoner, we read:

"I have always regarded with admiration and respect the demonstrations of human solidarity from Amnesty International in similar cases and I think that an intervention from a prestigious organization like yours would be very helpful to my son ..."

In addition to the above, quick action on some of our recent cases has brought forth some encouraging responses, both from international organizations and individuals willing to support our efforts, and from within Brazil itself where fast action has eventually meant that we received information on several other cases suitable for adoption, and has apparently brought an end to the torture the prisoner was said to be subjected to.

We hope that you will agree therefore that there is reason for feeling that our work in Brazil does have an effect, although much time often passes before we learn of it. For example, amongst the queries given above, the groups working on case 4 above had a very difficult time establishing contact with their prisoner, and once lost contact for a long period before his letter arrived. The priest noted in item 5 above, received his first letter from Amnesty one year ago, and it is only now that we learn that he did get it and appreciated our work.

In sum, do keep up your good work and do send us any encouraging letters or information concerning your work in Brazil, so that we can pass on the good news to all groups working on behalf of prisoners of conscience in Brazil.

For your further information, you will find attached several stencils:

- a recent press release on Brazil *
- circular about Santiago/Bossi cases and church-state relations *
- up-dated list of prisoners adopted by Amnesty in Brazil
- list of corrections to previous address lists
- stencil on "Continuing Controls over Brazilian Congress"

and, where appropriate

- address lists for Belo Horizonte & Porto Alegre
- further addresses for use in church cases
- further addresses for use in journalist cases

* already received by the national sections.