

TORTURE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN GREECE

SECOND REPORT BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

On January 27th Amnesty International, following an investigation carried out in Greece throughout the month of January, published a report on allegations that the Greek Government is practising the infliction of pain as an aid to interrogation. The Amnesty International Delegation had examined 16 witnesses who had been released and were at liberty in Athens and was satisfied that these people had been tortured. The witnesses were mostly members of Democratic Defence, the resistance organisation of the Centre Union Party. Many of them were students who had been arrested while distributing leaflets and had been tortured to reveal the names of their friends. These witnesses impressed the Delegation as being reliable and truthful. In addition, the Delegation obtained the names of 32 other prisoners still in prison whose families and professional advisors claimed that they had been tortured.

When the Report was circulated at Strasbourg, Amnesty International had in its hands the names and case histories of all the witnesses upon whom it relied in confirming the allegations which had been made. However, in the majority of cases, the Delegation had given its promise not to reveal the names of the witnesses because they were fearful of reprisals. Promises given had to be kept and it was decided that in all cases of people who had been released the risk of giving names was too great. In consequence, the Greek Government, through its official spokesmen, were able to attack the veracity of the Report on the grounds that no witnesses were named.

Nevertheless, as a result of certain influential representations which had been made to the Greek Government, that they should pay serious attention to the Amnesty International Report and take steps to satisfy world opinion as to the allegations of torture, Mr. Anthony Marreco, a member of the English Bar who had conducted the January investigation, was invited to return to Athens on March 26th to meet the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Mr. Stylianos Pattakos. Mr. Marreco had meetings with Mr. Pattakos on March 28th, 29th and April 1st and during his visit was given by Mr. Pattakos every facility to inspect any prison he wished and talk to any prisoner he wished to see.

On the evening of March 28th, Mr. Marreco visited the Police (Asphalia) Headquarters at Bouboulinas Street, Athens. He asked to see only one prisoner, Andreas Lendakis, 32, an archaeological student who was arrested in October 1967 as a member of the Patriotic Front (communist). This prisoner refused to answer the question whether or not he had been tortured and was unwilling to talk about his experiences beyond saying that he was ill. Mr. Marreco, however, had little doubt from his general demeanour that he had suffered extreme brutality. When a prisoner is asked if he has been tortured, he will surely answer 'no' if this is not the case, if only because he is even more likely to suffer reprisals if he lies than if he tells the truth. When a prisoner refuses to answer, this seems to raise at least a justifiable presumption that he has been tortured. Before leaving the Bouboulinas Street Headquarters Mr. Marreco was allowed to

tolerable for a prisoner held for a night or two but is quite unsuitable for the detention of prisoners for periods up to two or three months for which these cells have been used. Mr. Marreco also inspected the terrace and roof top building which, it has been widely alleged, have been used as the place of torture. These buildings were exactly as described in the statements taken from the 16 witnesses who had been released, but beyond this fact no evidence was found either to prove or disprove the allegations.

On March 30th and 31st, Mr. Marreco visited respectively the prisons of Averoff and Aegina. At each prison he asked to see a number of prisoners who were brought to him in the presence of the Governor of the prison and an officer of the Police. He had not named in advance the prisoners he intended to see, so that the authorities had no warning which witnesses would be called. In both prisons the attitude of the witnesses was different from that of the man still in the hands of the Police. Out of a total of 12 prisoners seen, 9 said quite definitely that they had been tortured and one said that he preferred not to answer the question. In each case the story they told corroborated all previous evidence as to place and the names of the torturers. The interrogation had taken the form of severe beating on the soles of the feet (Falanga) or Electric Shock treatment, the contacts being applied to the ears and other parts of the body.

Amongst the prisoners seen at Averoff Prison were Gerassimos Notaras, 31, an internationally respected economist and research fellow at the Social Science Centre of Athens, formerly assistant lecturer in the Political Science Faculty of the University of Lausanne; Constantine Sophoulis, 30, economist and grandson of a former Prime Minister, and Charalambos Protopapas, 45, Assistant Secretary-General of the Greek League for Human Rights. These men were Centre Union members of Democratic Defence who were arrested in October 1967. Sophoulis, who has not been tortured himself, confirmed the rumours which have been widely reported in the press that Notaras was removed from the prison on February 8th to the Royal Hellenic Navy vessel 'Elli' lying near Scaramanga where they were interrogated under torture in connection with an alleged Democratic Defence organisation which had been discovered in the Navy. Sophoulis said that when Notaras returned to the prison and for ten days after his return his physical and mental condition was clear evidence of the treatment he had suffered. He was unable to speak and barely able to walk. Notaras himself told Mr. Marreco that he had suffered electric shock treatment during 48 hours. Protopapas was unwilling to answer questions. The remainder of the prisoners seen both at Averoff and Aegina were known to be communists. Making all possible allowance for the possibility that some of these men were either describing tortures suffered at some earlier period in their lives and under previous governments, and also for the possibility that the communists have been instructed to exaggerate the brutality of the treatment they have suffered (an explanation which Mr. Pattakos had suggested) Mr. Marreco found it impossible to avoid the conclusion that what the witnesses told him was substantially correct.

In talking to the prisoners, Mr. Marreco was also impressed by the measure of psychological terror which certain prisoners continually suffer by reason of their fear that at any moment the Police may return and take them away for further questioning. At least one of the witnesses described the terrible mental effect of being kept in a cell for days in solitary confinement within earshot of the place where other prisoners were being tortured.

On April 1st Mr. Marreco had his third meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior at which he had to inform Mr. Pattakos that following his investigation he considered that there is at least prima facie evidence that the following prisoners have been tortured:

Dakos, Apostolos tortured on or about 27/10/67 at Asphalia, Bouboulinas Street, Athens.

Karantinos, Panaiotis tortured on or about 16/6/67 and 30/7/67 at Asphalia, Bouboulinas Street, Athens, by or in the presence of Mr. Karapanaiotis.

Karatsis, Charalambos tortured on or about 1/11/67 at Asphalia, Aghiou Spiridonos, Aegaleo.

Lendakis, Andreas tortured in October 1967 at Asphalia, Bouboulinas Street, Athens.

Notaras, Gerassimos tortured in February/March 1968 on board the Royal Greek Naval Vessel 'Elli'.

Papaianakis, Christos tortured on or about 19/10/67 at Asphalia, Piraeus, by or in the presence of Mr. Gianakopoulos, Mr. Sotiris Kouvas, Mr. Loukas Lazoutsos, Mr. Panaiotis Angelopoulos, Mr. Kanatas, Mr. Fotinopoulos.

Protopapas, Charalambos tortured in October /November 1967 at Asphalia, Bouboulinas Street, Athens.

Stratis, Giannis tortured in September 1967 at Averoff Prison, by or in the presence of Major Theophiloianakis and Captain Kritikos and on or about 1/10/67 at Dionysos Military Camp, by or in the presence of Sergeant Taxiarchis and 2 Military Police Corporals.

Syderis, Leonidas tortured in September 1967 at Asphalia, Plateia Amerikis, Kypseli, by or in the presence of Mr. Lambrou, Mr. Panagopoulos, Mr. Mallios.

Xakoulakos, Giannis tortured on or about 5/5/67 at Asphalia, Aghiou Spiridonos, Aegaleo, by or in the presence of Mr. Zagouras and Mr. Kapoiannis.

Mr. Marreco suggested that the Greek Government should immediately, either, order a Public Inquiry or institute criminal proceedings against certain officials named, if only to clear their reputation.

Mr. Pattakos's reply was a complete denial that the allegations are or can be true. He said that he has complete confidence in his officials and that the evidence given to Mr. Marreco is a tissue of lies from beginning to end, typical of communist propaganda. He said that all the witnesses including Notaras are known communists who have plotted violence against the Greek people. After prolonged and at moments heated argument, in which Mr. Marreco repeatedly told Mr. Pattakos that in all sincerity he was convinced that the allegations are substantially true and at least call for serious investigation, and that the political affiliations of the prisoners cannot in any sense be a justification of the treatment they claim to have suffered, Mr. Pattakos maintained that there are no grounds for further investigation. Mr. Marreco pointed out that

unless the allegations are disproved Greece must inevitably face expulsion from the Council of Europe.

Pattakos: Let them throw us out.

Anthony Marreco: Is that what you wish me to go back to London and say?

Pattakos: You force me to say it. The Greek Government has to protect its people against its communist enemies. A communist is not a Greek. We must put our own security first.

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