

Pen mightier than sword

Amnesty group uses letter as basic weapon

LONDON — Amnesty International, the London-based human rights organization, believes in the old saying that you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

The Nobel Peace Prize-winning organization's basic weapon is the ordinary, friendly letter.

AI has more than 200,000 members in 134 countries who regularly bombard heads of state and other authorities with letters and postcards calling for freedom for "prisoners of conscience."

This is the quiet, plodding side of the organization's work that most people don't hear about.

Human rights campaigns come and go. AI was happy that President Carter raised the issue of human rights to the forefront of world opinion. It was disillusioned that the campaign later fizzled out. Meantime, the needs of prisoners remain the same.

AI's basic aim is the release of prisoners detained for their beliefs, religion, color, sex, ethnic origin or language. The organization itself claims to be no political or ideological sides, although it is assailed regularly by regimes of both extreme left and right.

Military-ruled Brazil, for example, called it "an instrument of communist terrorism." The Soviet Union said it was "in a leading position among organizations which conduct anti-Soviet propaganda." AI points to the Nobel Prize it won in 1977, which a Uruguayan official described as "a joke in bad taste," as evidence of its impartiality.

AI warns recruits to prepare for frustration and disappointment. Some letter-writing campaigns last for years without eliciting a response.

But Malcolm Tigerschild of Sweden, AI's membership secretary, said the organization has clear evidence the postal campaigns are effective.

"These letters say, darn it, Amnesty hasn't forgotten," Tigerschild said. "In virtually no bureaucracy will a flunky throw away a letter personally addressed to the president."

Members are told to word letters carefully and courteously, not to attack the government and to stress their own political impartiality. A basic rule is that no member is allowed to plead for a prisoner in his or her own country. And no Amnesty group or individual member is expected to provide information about their own country.

"We always tell members at least to pretend to be sympathetic," Tigerschild said. "Governments are used to being attacked. But a friendly letter from a nice old lady tends to be embarrassing."

AI says it doesn't defend what people say, but their right to say it.

"We have helped 20,000 individually named prisoners, of whom 15,000 no longer are in prison," said Richard Reoch, an AI spokesman. "There is no way of telling whether we had any part in their release. But we get all sorts of mail from former prisoners saying we helped them to get out."

"You are not dead, because too many people are concerned about you," an Argentine security official told one tortured prisoner after a letter-writing campaign on his behalf.

Many Amnesty groups "adopt" particular prisoners. Others

write individually on behalf of prisoners identified in the organization's monthly newsletter.

The prisoners of conscience are selected by AI's 65-person research department after exhaustive checks. The organization declines to act on behalf of prisoners who have used or advocated violence, which rules out guerrillas and terrorists.

But South Africa, a frequent target of AI campaigns, recently produced a pamphlet entitled "Amnesty Supports Terrorism."

AI began in 1961, the result of an appeal by British lawyer Peter Benenson.

Since then it has campaigned worldwide for the indivisibility of human rights and for abolition of torture and the death penalty. It sends frequent missions to check the observance of

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international legal standards in political cases. It produces frequent detailed reports on specific human rights violations.

AI's international secretariat in London has a full-time staff of 130, working in a slightly chaotic but relaxed atmosphere surrounded by potted plants and stacks of books. The secretariat last year scraped by on an international budget of \$2 million, mostly raised by voluntary contributions.

Although it has members around the world, AI basically is a product of wealthy industrialized societies. Its concept of human rights is Western liberal rather than Marxist, Islamic or some other variety.

Some AI members argue that this calls for special vigilance on human rights in Western societies, and the possible complicity of their own governments in rights violations in the Third World.

Richard Barbor-Might, a British AI organizer, wrote recently that many states accused of rights violations "are intimately connected with the political, military and economic power centers in our own society. The fate of prisoners of conscience is therefore often bound up with political developments, whose authorities are to be found in London or Washington, Bonn or Paris, as much as in Third World capitals."

AI leaders are acutely sensitive about the organization's reputation for impartiality. The rule against involvement with developments in their own countries makes it easier for people of different political persuasions to work together on common problems.

"In some Amnesty sections there is a fantastic political polarization from Left to Right," Tigerschild said. "Yet people manage to work together. That's because AI's basic message is easy to understand and appeals to ordinary human beings."

Vet uses acupuncture as tool to treat animals

MARIETTA, Ga. — Viewed as a form of quackery by some, acupuncture is being used by a Georgia veterinarian to prolong the careers of valuable race and jumping horses and show dogs.

Howard Rand, a veterinarian who doesn't like to admit defeat, says the ancient Chinese medical treatment gives him another effective tool in his fight to help animals.

"You tell people about acupuncture and they're very skeptical," said Rand. "They think of voodoo — that I should wear a cape and carry a magic wand."

"There are a lot of skeptics," he continued. "I can understand that. I am still skeptical. I still shake my head and can't understand why it works. But it works. As long as I get results, that's what counts."

Rand, who combines acupuncture with traditional veterinary medicine, has treated race horses, Olympic-caliber Grand Prix horses (jumpers) and show dogs. His referrals have come from as far away as New York and he has been flown to Kentucky to treat thoroughbreds.

"I have had horses in here that were given up, couldn't race, that went back and won stakes races," said Rand. "I have one racing in England now."

While many of his patients are valuable animals, he also uses acupuncture on backyard and household pets. But he said he believes many people probably pass up acupuncture treatment for their animals because they mistakenly think the cost will be prohibitive.

Rand set up his practice just north of Atlanta after graduating from Auburn University in 1965. He got interested in acupuncture when a friend involved with horse racing asked him about the ancient Chinese practice that uses needles and electricity to stimulate certain points on the body.

He attended a six-month course sponsored by the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society and taught by Dr. Ed Wong, a Chinese physician who

now lives in Denver, and is one of only 250 members of the society worldwide.

When acupuncture is used on an animal, it usually takes six treatments. The animal is tranquilized and each treatment lasts about 20 minutes.

Rand said there is proof that stimulation of acupuncture points causes the body to produce a neural hormone called "enkephalins."

"This is a pain-killer hormone that is naturally produced in the body," he said.

"Everyday I use acupuncture," said Rand. "Say we've got an animal with a kidney infection. I will take the antibiotic and put it in the kidney (acupuncture) point instead of just taking the antibiotic and sticking it in the neck as most people do."

"That is why I feel like I'm getting better results." There are several reasons acupuncture has gotten a "bad name," Rand said.

"One problem with acupuncture is that, for some reason or another, people have gotten the idea it is a panacea — a cure-all," he said. "It's not a cure-all. My results are only about 85 percent. But you don't get 100 percent on penicillin either."

Rand said another thing that has given acupuncture a bad name is that some practitioners will never admit failure.

"I can't stand defeat," he said. "Anything I can use additionally to try to help an animal, I'll try. You cannot say I'm a pioneer in the field of acupuncture because I'm not. But I'm probably one of the very few using it."

Rand said in recent years some veterinarians have tried to practice acupuncture without the proper training.

"They don't know what they are doing," he said. "Obviously they are going to get bad results. And there again acupuncture is going to get a bad name. I call that 'quackopuncture' — acupuncture done by quacks."

Enrollment totals in at Texas

AUSTIN — University of Texas officials said final counts indicated 19,973 students enrolled in one or both of the summer terms at the school's Austin campus.

Admissions officials said 28,618 students are pre-registered for fall and another 12,000 students are expected to sign up this week.


Spring enrollment totalled 41,963, up from the 1979 spring enrollment of 40,488.

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Great white shark afraid of the dark

SAN FRANCISCO — Scientists have learned from their failure to raise a 300-pound great white shark in captivity that the big fish are afraid of the dark.

"We learned a lot from 'Sandy,' as we fondly called this great white, but there's still a lot more to learn," Ed Miller, a marine biologist, said.

"Sandy," a seven-foot, year-old female, was captured in a flounder net, and the fisherman turned her over to the Steinhart Aquarium. Keepers released her in the Pacific several days after her capture because they feared she might not survive.

Dr. John McCosker of the aquarium said scientists learned the shark did not like normal daylight and was terrified when all the lights were turned out.

He said great white sharks were best adapted to the light level of 60 feet under water.

The biologists had been hopeful she would be the first great white to survive in captivity.

Their minds changed abruptly when it was discovered that the maintenance system of their 100,000-gallon tank was putting minute electric shocks into the water.

So the shark was taken by a fishing boat to a site popular among sharks near the Farallon Islands 30 miles off San Francisco.

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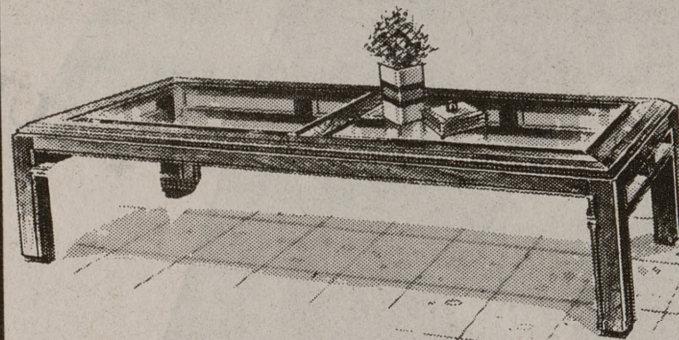


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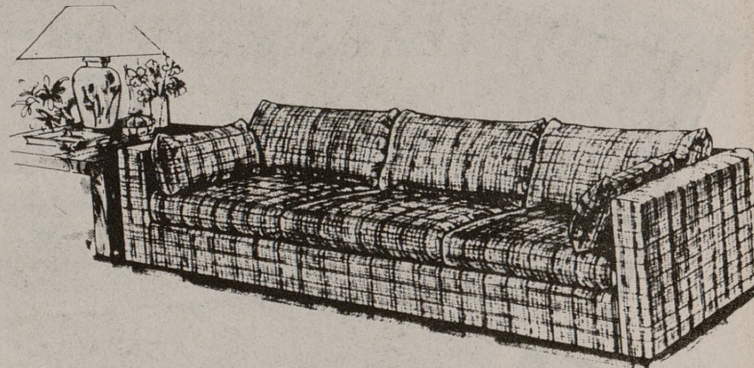
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